

04

AND
FOOLISHNESS
WISDOM

LEADER GUIDE

ADULTS



SUMMER | 2025

GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

WE NEED THE TRUE KING

The last verse in the book of Judges—a book that chronicles the downward spiral of disobedience of those who were called to be radically different as the people of God—is one of the most depressing verses in the Bible: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Judges 21:25).

Is this not a fitting definition of sin? In this one verse, we see the prideful root of self-lordship, self-exaltation, and self-determination at the core of all our rebellion. We are, in our own minds, the gods of our own universe; we choose whatever is right and wrong for ourselves, and anything that imposes some authority over us other than our own autonomous minds, hearts, and desires is a constraint that must be thrown off.

As sinners, we are like the Israelites of old, convinced of our own truth, our own ideas, and our own wisdom. Our sin has blinded us to what is truly good and right, and it's precisely because of this blindness that we need a true king.

We need a king who tells us the truth, guides us with justice, and leads us in righteousness—a king who can open our eyes to these things and more. Because we are enslaved by sin, the true king must not only be our ruler but also our rescuer.

In Jesus, we find this King—the One before whom every knee will bow and whose greatness every tongue will eventually confess. In Jesus, the true King has come. He is the King of love as well as the King of power. In Jesus, and in Him alone, will we finally find all our desires for peace, security, and wholeness met.

We must then acknowledge that every other king we seek to enthrone is only a substitute for Jesus. It is far better for us to trust in Jesus, not only as our rescuer but also as our ruler, and to acknowledge that all authority has been given to Him.

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THE EDITOR

Proverbs 1:7 states, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.” Nowhere is this more true than in the history of the kings of Israel.

This quarter we will read through the lives of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon. Rather than label each one as foolish or wise, it would be good to note when their actions were foolish or wise, when they feared the Lord in wisdom, and when they trusted themselves in folly.

And though we learn from their successes and failures, what we want to truly see is the character of God and how He keeps His promises in establishing a kingly line that would one day lead to Jesus, our ultimate king—the King of kings.

He is the only one who rules with complete wisdom and knowledge, who redeems and rescues His people from all enemies, especially sin and death, and who leads us toward the Father into life everlasting. He is a king who is always with us and for us, who fights our battles and shares with us His wisdom and the eternal riches of glory.

In this life we will have many leaders—national, local, church, and more. Though we honor and respect them as our leaders, no one can replace or be put above the leader we have in Christ.

As we study God’s Word, let us learn and respond in wise thoughts and actions. And let us mostly reflect on the God who deserves all the glory, the One who keeps His promises and acts for us because of His faithfulness and love and for the glory of His kingdom.

Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults



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The Gospel Project®

Adult Leader Guide
Summer 2025
Volume 1, Number 4

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WHAT PRESCHOOLERS TAUGHT ME ABOUT LEADING ADULTS

By Dwayne McCrary



One of the more desired rewards to earn in a preschool class is being the line leader. The first thing children will reveal to their parents at the end of the day is that they got to be the line leader. They won the prize by setting an example for the rest to follow. In most cases, the line leader is the one exhibiting the behavior desired by the teacher. In some cases, the child is selected by the teacher, who hopes the child will exhibit the desired behavior. Either way, the line leader sets the standard for that day.

When we accepted the role of leading an ongoing Bible study group, we became the line leader for that group. It is even possible that we too shared with our parents that we are a group leader! Let's think about how the line leader in a preschool class helps us understand our role as an adult group leader.

SETS THE EXAMPLE

As already stated, the line leader serves as an example for everyone else to follow. That is how they got to be the line leader in the first place. The other preschoolers know that the line leader represents the expectations for the rest of the class.

When we accepted the role of a group leader, we also accepted the responsibility of representing what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. That willingness to follow Jesus should be one thing that qualifies us to be the group leader. Following matters.



As strange as this may seem, the title of leader is earned by a willingness to follow. The preschooler follows the expectations defined by their teacher, and adult group leaders follow the expectations defined by the Teacher, the Lord. Following God's Word with humility makes us capable of leading others.

As strange as this may seem, the title of leader is earned by a willingness to follow.

FOCUSES ON THE TASK

The preschool line leader focuses on the assigned task, which can include holding on to the rope, walking with purpose, and arriving at a specific destination. Holding the rope may be the biggest challenge for the line leader because children often let go of the rope as they make their way down a hall or through a group of other preschoolers.

Lots of distractions exist that can take the attention of an adult Bible study group as well. We can become focused on physical needs, world events, and class socials and forget about some of the larger items. None of these are bad if they do not become the primary focus of the group.

One of the roles we play as the group leader is maintaining a focus on reaching those far from God. This focus includes challenging ourselves to be more intentional in praying for those far from God and making sure our group does the same. If we lose sight of the main thing, so will everyone else in our group.

BRINGS OTHERS ALONG

The preschool line leader brings others along for a walk. They encourage other classmates to grab the rope and join them in the journey. They also help those who get disconnected and lose their grip to reconnect. The line leader makes sure everyone arrives safely.

As adult Bible study group leaders, we get to encourage others to join our group so they can discover some biblical truths together. We may be called upon to contact others who are struggling

and in danger of becoming stragglers. We want to do our best to give everyone an opportunity to arrive safely.

Everyone arriving safely may mean we add a second “rope” and show others how to be a group leader. We then can make room for more people to grab part of the rope. Apprenticing others to become great line leaders may be more important than we realize. There really is no better way for another person to become a great line leader than learning from those already doing it.

We have the privilege of being line leaders for the Bible study group we lead. We can set an example, help the group remain focused, and bring others with us for the journey. We make our heavenly Father proud when we serve well as a line leader.

Dwayne McCrary is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible Studies at Lifeway.



SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

GOSPEL STORY

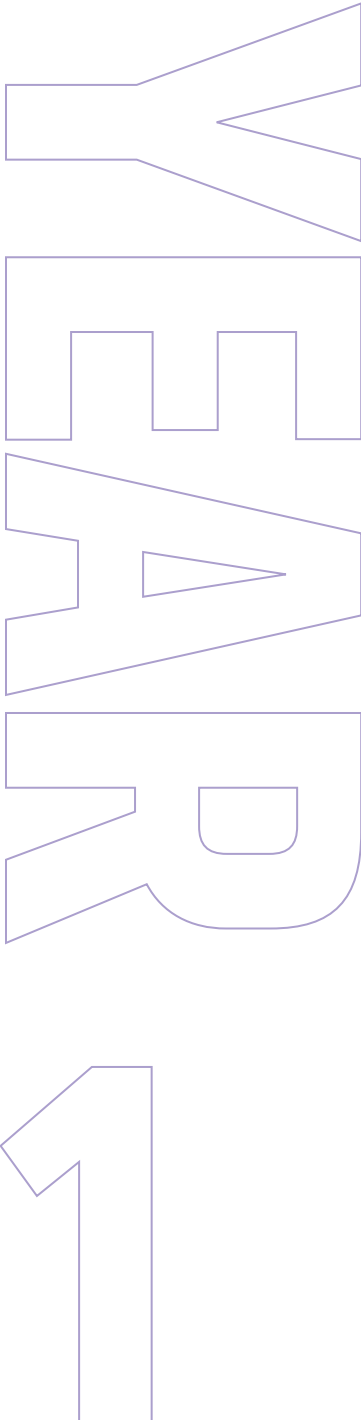
Our aim is to help people see the storyline of Scripture, the thread from the beginning to end, that weaves God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him, helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to empower believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.



VOL 01:
CREATION AND COVENANT

(Genesis; Job)

Fall 2024

Unit 01: Foundations

Unit 02: God's Promises

Unit 03: Struggles of Faith

VOL 02:
LAW AND LIFE

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)

Winter 2024–25

Unit 04: God's Miraculous Work

Unit 05: God's Character

Unit 06: Humanity's Selfishness

VOL 03:
LAND AND LOSS

(Joshua–1 Samuel)

Spring 2025

Unit 07: God Is for His People

Unit 08: God Delivers His People

Unit 09: God Cares for His People

VOL 04:
FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

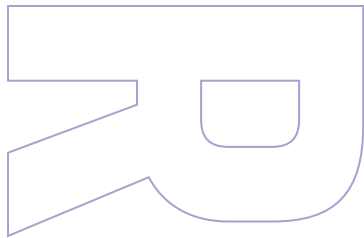
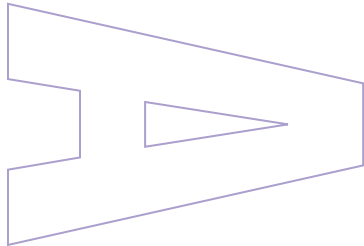
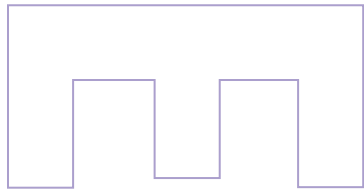
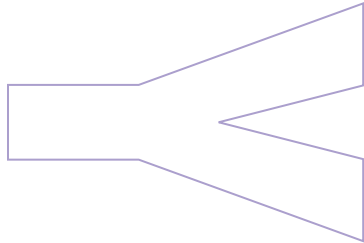
(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

Summer 2025

Unit 10: The Foolishness of God's People

Unit 11: Everything Belongs to the Lord

Unit 12: The Need for Wisdom



VOL 05:

DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)

Fall 2025

Unit 13: Divisions

Unit 14: Renewal

Unit 15: Decline

VOL 06:

PROPHETS AND PROVISION

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)

Winter 2025–26

Unit 16: God in the Exile

Unit 17: God in the Restoration

Unit 18: God in the Return

VOL 07:

THE SON HAS COME

(The Gospels)

Spring 2026

Unit 19: The Arrival

Unit 20: The Preparation

Unit 21: The Ministry

VOL 08:

THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

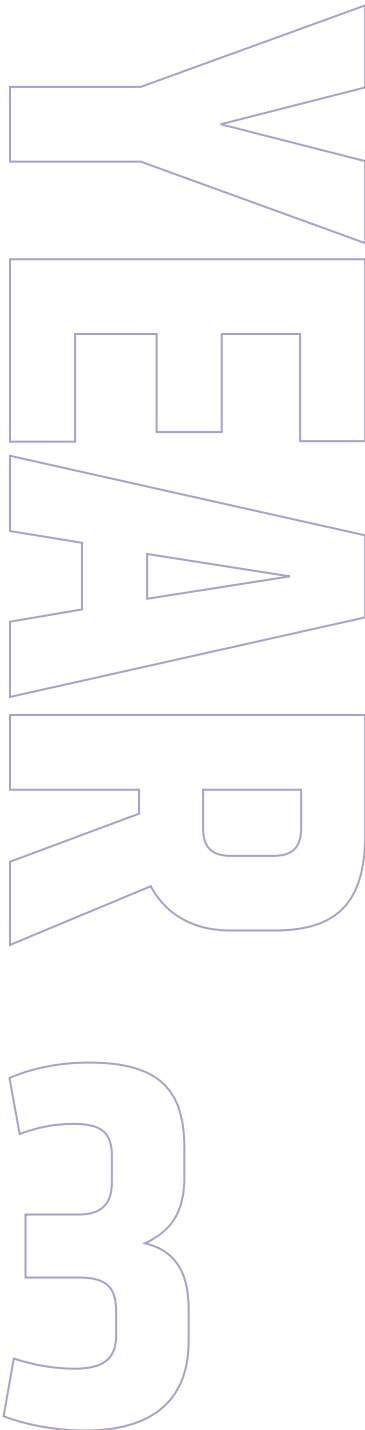
(The Gospels)

Summer 2026

Unit 22: Responses to Jesus

Unit 23: The Way of Jesus

Unit 24: The Teachings of Jesus



VOL 09:
THE SON HAS TRUTH

(The Gospels)

Fall 2026

Unit 25: The Truth of His Power

Unit 26: The Truth of His Actions

Unit 27: The Truth of His Kingdom

VOL 10:
THE SON HAS RISEN

(The Gospels; Acts)

Winter 2026–27

Unit 28: The Final Days

Unit 29: Post-Resurrection

Unit 30: The Gospel Spreads

VOL 11:
THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION

(Acts; The Epistles)

Spring 2027

Unit 31: Sharing Truths of the Mission

Unit 32: Living Out the Mission

Unit 33: Christ Focuses Our Mission

VOL 12:
THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE

(The Epistles; Revelation)

Summer 2027

Unit 34: We Are in Christ

Unit 35: We Are Citizens of Heaven

Unit 36: Jesus


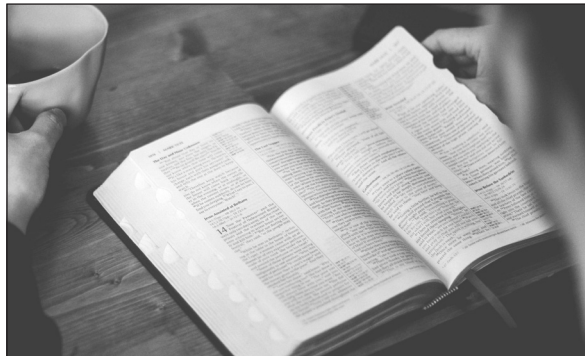
HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide is an important tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- **Daily Readings**
- **Chronological Timeline**



TIMELINE

Samuel Is Born (1 Samuel 1)

Elis House Is Debated (1 Samuel 2)

Samuel Hears God's Call (1 Samuel 3)


The Ark Is Lost In Battle and Returned (1 Samuel 4-7)

Samuel Anoints Saul as Israel's First King (1 Samuel 9-10)

SESSION STUDY
The Israelites Demand a King (1 Samuel 8)

Daily Readings

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: 1 Samuel 8:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: 1 Samuel 11:1-15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: 1 Samuel 12:1-25
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: 1 Samuel 10:17-27	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 37



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

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2) STUDY FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages that will guide you and your group to prepare for Bible study during the week before group time begins. A Bible study prompt will help you engage with the Scripture passage, but encourage your group to do more than what’s asked in the prompt. Space is provided for you and your group to add notes and questions and markings that will help you study the passage more deeply and see any nuances about the words and phrases of the Scripture provided. In addition to a brief commentary with thought-provoking questions to help you and your group dig deeper into the text, leader notes will provide you with additional nuggets for understanding the Scriptures. Use this Personal Preparation to experience what your group is experiencing as they study the week prior. Consider what questions, thoughts, or challenges they might have while engaging with the Scripture passages.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Notes

GOD MAY ALLOW US TO PURSUE OUR WORLDLY DESIRES TO REMIND US THEY WON'T FULFILL (1 SAMUEL 8:4-9)

In the space provided, summarize in one sentence the Lord's response to Samuel.

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. 5 They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have." 6 When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand wrong, so he prayed to the Lord. 7 But the Lord told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king. 8 They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning me and worshipping other gods. 9 Listen to them, but solemnly warn them and tell them about the customary rights of the king who will reign over them."

At first, the words of Israel's elders to Samuel seemed harsh. Put yourself in their shoes. Samuel had been a faithful judge, but he had a poor succession plan! His sons weren't fit for leadership, so the Israelites demanded a king like the other nations (v. 5). God clarified the real problem for us—they were ultimately rejecting God as their king, perpetuating the cycle of idolatry that was prevalent since they left Egypt and during the time of the judges (v. 8). As God's people, the Israelites were called to be distinct and not like the other idolatrous nations. We too are called to be distinct. We must not assimilate to the practices of the culture around us.

LEADER NOTE: There is a pattern of unfaithfulness in 1 Samuel particularly with the children of Israel's leaders. First, Eli's sons were wicked, taking advantage of the sacrifices and of women (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22). God pronounced judgment on Eli's household as a result of his failure to curb his sons' sin. Samuel's sons also did not walk in his ways, seeking dishonest profit, taking bribes, and perverting justice (8:3). We are not told why his sons turned away, but this pattern reinforces the importance of passing on the faith to the next generation.

Samuel's first response to the people's request for a king was to pray to God. Though he considered their demand wrong, he first sought the Lord before responding. This is wisdom we can glean from Samuel and apply when we are approached with a problem. As Israel's leader, Samuel may have felt personally rejected (v. 7), but first and foremost, Israel was rejecting God. Had Samuel responded off the cuff, he would have misunderstood the problem.

20 Unit 10 | Session 1 | Foolish Envy

Key Concept: God sometimes allows foolishness so we recognize it.

Notes

What are your typical first responses when faced with a problem?

LEADER NOTE: It may seem like Samuel and God took issue with the whole concept of human kingship. However, earlier in Israel's history, the Lord anticipated what took place in 1 Samuel 8. Deuteronomy 17:14-20 provides a list of stipulations from God about the character and conduct of the king Israel would choose for itself. It seems that the foundational problem with Israel's request for a king was that in their hearts, they rejected God as their king. Their idolatrous motive was the ultimate problem.

Though God allowed Israel the freedom to have a king, He also clearly explained how this would affect their nation and families. As with Israel, God sometimes allows us the freedom to choose our way even if it leads to sorrowful results. In our pride, we often think we know what is best for us. However, God sees more clearly than we can—He knows and declares the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). If we continue to pursue foolish ways, God may allow us to experience the consequences of our actions.

The Lord reminded Samuel that Israel's tendency for idolatry began "the day I brought them out of Egypt" (1 Sam. 8:8). Our sinful nature runs deep, and even though Israel had experienced physical salvation from slavery in Egypt, it is clear that the human heart and its bent toward idolatry is a problem that cannot be solved by good leaders. Eventually, a better king named Jesus Christ came to change His people's hearts from the inside out.

As a believer, how do you recognize the sinful tendencies in your heart and move toward true and lasting change?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHRIST AS KING: God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

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3) DIRECT THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to be used in the group context to engage your group in active learning. The personal prep you and your group put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during your group time. The first page of the Group Experience will help you engage your group members as they arrive. Dialogue suggestions describe the context, transitions, and a recap of Bible readings or previous sessions to remind your group of what has already been studied or give a framework for where the lesson is heading. The second page gives a visual representation of the activity from the Personal Study Guide. A teaching outline helps guide your members through the activity and the debrief discussion.

Key Concept: God sometimes allows foolishness so we recognize it.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct the group to page 20 in the Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a table with the headings "Foolish Request" and "Unintended Consequences." Display this table on a board in the room and record the group's findings as they discuss the Scripture text.

Envy and Consequences

Using 1 Samuel 8:4-20, analyze Israel's foolish request and the unintended consequences that resulted from it.

FOOLISH REQUEST	UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES
ISRAELITES	
MYSELF	

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:4-9.

DISCUSS: Instruct the group to record in the space provided the request the Israelites made. Then ask: "What motivated the Israelites to demand a king, and why was that a foolish request and a 'wrong' demand (v. 6)? What happens when our hearts are motivated by envy or a lack of trust in God?" (we try to take matters into our own hands; we make passive-aggressive comments to others; we demand God give us what we want)

REFLECT: Encourage your group to think about their own lives and a request they made to God that seems foolish in retrospect. (e.g., asking God to help you pass a test you didn't study for; praying to stay in a relationship that doesn't honor God or could be dangerous to your physical wellbeing) Ask: "Recognizing that we have all made foolish requests of God, how can we know what requests are wise to ask of God?" In addition to answers from your group, encourage

Notes



- Group Activity
- Interactive Questions
- Theological Applications

4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

After the recap of the activity, help your group take the next steps with the day's Scripture lesson by walking them through the Head, Heart, and Hands applications. Invite volunteers to share and discuss answers to the questions for their mutual benefit. Then take prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week. And finally, guide your group to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word as you conclude the session.

Key Concept: God sometimes allows foolishness so we recognize it.

deficiency between us and the world, we must remember that the Lord is more than sufficient for us.

In what areas of your life are you prone to envy the world's resources or way of living?

HANDS: In this text, we see how worldly leadership focuses on taking rather than giving. But the true King whom God would send—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—was Himself a gift from God (John 3:16), and He laid down His life as a ransom to save all who would believe in Him (Mark 10:45). Therefore, as Christians, our lives should be marked by what we give more than what we take.

What are some ways you can be generous in contrast with the world and point people to Jesus?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Psalm 139:23-24 and spend some time praying about your motivation in prayer. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any areas in which you have experienced envy of those around you.
- Read Matthew 6:9-13 and examine the Lord's Prayer. Notice God's provision, God's power, and God's plan. Use the Lord's Prayer as a guide to pray each day in the next week.
- Reflect on a time you prayed for something and God said no, and later you understood why that was not best for you. Praise God for directing your steps to what you needed.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 21 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: We can be tempted to envy the world and its ways, especially if it appears like sinners enjoy a better life. However, the better life for us is not now but yet to come. Pray through Psalm 37:5-6 that your group would commit themselves to the Lord in all things.

27



- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 10

THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE



1 SAMUEL



MEMORY VERSE

“If you fear the LORD, worship and obey him,
and if you don’t rebel against the LORD’s command,
then both you and the king who reigns over you
will follow the LORD your God.”

—1 Samuel 12:14



FOOLISH ENVY

CORE PASSAGE: 1 SAMUEL 8:4-20

CONTEXT

Through Israel's history, the Lord always provided a human leader. Moses led the people out of Egypt, and Joshua led them into the promised land. Judges governed the people of Israel with deteriorating levels of success after the death of Joshua. Though Samuel was a well-respected prophet, priest, and judge, his sons did not follow the Lord faithfully as their father did. Therefore, the people petitioned for new leadership—they want a king. This pivotal moment in Israel's history fulfilled God's words to Moses in Deuteronomy 17 and paved the way for the kingdom of Israel under Saul, David, and Solomon, and ultimately Jesus.

KEY CONCEPT

God sometimes allows foolishness so we recognize it.

As you read 1 Samuel 8:4-20:

- Reflect on the fact that God allows us the freedom to choose our way even if it leads to sorrowful results.
- Consider how the desire to be like the world is a strong force of temptation even for believers today.



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TIMELINE

Samuel Is Born (1 Samuel 1)

Samuel Hears God's Call
(1 Samuel 3)

SESSION STUDY:
The Israelites Demand a King (1 Samuel 8)

Eli's House Is Rebuked
(1 Samuel 2)

The Ark Is Lost in Battle and Returned
(1 Samuel 4-7)

Samuel Anoints Saul as Israel's First King (1 Samuel 9-10)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 1 Samuel 8:1-22

☐ **Day 4:** 1 Samuel 11:1-15

☐ **Day 2:** 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16

☐ **Day 5:** 1 Samuel 12:1-25

☐ **Day 3:** 1 Samuel 10:17-27

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 37



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

**GOD MAY ALLOW US TO PURSUE OUR WORLDLY DESIRES
TO REMIND US THAT THEY WON'T FULFILL (1 SAMUEL 8:4-9).**

In the space provided, summarize in one sentence the Lord's response to Samuel.

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. **5** They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have." **6** When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand wrong, so he prayed to the LORD. **7** But the LORD told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king. **8** They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning me and worshiping other gods. **9** Listen to them, but solemnly warn them and tell them about the customary rights of the king who will reign over them."

At first, the words of Israel's elders to Samuel seemed harsh. Put yourself in their shoes. Samuel had been a faithful judge, but he had a poor succession plan! His sons weren't fit for leadership, so the Israelites demanded a king like the other nations (v. 5). God clarified the real problem for us—they were ultimately rejecting God as their king, perpetuating the cycle of idolatry that was prevalent since they left Egypt and during the time of the judges (v. 8). As God's people, the Israelites were called to be distinct and not like the other idolatrous nations. We too are called to be distinct. We must not assimilate to the practices of the culture around us.

LEADER NOTE: There is a pattern of unfaithfulness in 1 Samuel particularly with the children of Israel's leaders. First, Eli's sons were wicked, taking advantage of the sacrifices and of women (1 Sam. 2:12-17,22). God pronounced judgment on Eli's household as a result of his failure to curb his sons' sin. Samuel's sons also did not walk in his ways, seeking dishonest profit, taking bribes, and perverting justice (8:3). We are not told why his sons turned away, but this pattern reinforces the importance of passing on the faith to the next generation.

Samuel's first response to the people's request for a king was to pray to God. Though he considered their demand wrong, he first sought the Lord before responding. This is wisdom we can glean from Samuel and apply when we are approached with a problem. As Israel's leader, Samuel may have felt personally rejected (v. 7), but first and foremost, Israel was rejecting God. Had Samuel responded off the cuff, he would have misunderstood the problem.

What are your typical first responses when faced with a problem?

LEADER NOTE: It may seem like Samuel and God took issue with the whole concept of human kingship. However, earlier in Israel's history, the Lord anticipated what took place in 1 Samuel 8. Deuteronomy 17:14-20 provides a list of stipulations from God about the character and conduct of the king Israel would choose for itself. It seems that the foundational problem with Israel's request for a king was that in their hearts, they rejected God as their king. Their idolatrous motive was the ultimate problem.

Though God allowed Israel the freedom to have a king, He also clearly explained how this would affect their nation and families. As with Israel, God sometimes allows us the freedom to choose our way even if it leads to sorrowful results. In our pride, we often think we know what is best for us. However, God sees more clearly than we can—He knows and declares the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). If we continue to pursue foolish ways, God may allow us to experience the consequences of our actions.

The Lord reminded Samuel that Israel's tendency for idolatry began "the day I brought them out of Egypt" (1 Sam. 8:8). Our sinful nature runs deep, and even though Israel had experienced physical salvation from slavery in Egypt, it is clear that the human heart and its bent toward idolatry is a problem that cannot be solved by good leaders. Eventually, a better king named Jesus Christ came to change His people's hearts from the inside out.

As a believer, how do you recognize the sinful tendencies in your heart and move toward true and lasting change?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHRIST AS KING: God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

WHEN WE WANT TO BE LIKE THE WORLD, WE MAY ENDURE DIRE CONSEQUENCES (1 SAMUEL 8:10-20).

Circle the verb repeated six times in this passage and summarize how it will define the people's relationship with their king.

10 Samuel told all the LORD's words to the people who were asking him for a king. **11** He said, "These are the rights of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and put them to his use in his chariots, on his horses, or running in front of his chariots. **12** He can appoint them for his use as commanders of thousands or commanders of fifties, to plow his ground and reap his harvest, or to make his weapons of war and the equipment for his chariots. **13** He can take your daughters to become perfumers, cooks, and bakers. **14** He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his servants. **15** He can take a tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give them to his officials and servants. **16** He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best cattle, and your donkeys and use them for his work. **17** He can take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves can become his servants. **18** When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you've chosen for yourselves, but the LORD won't answer you on that day." **19** The people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We must have a king over us. **20** Then we'll be like all the other nations: our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles."

Fulfilling his role as a prophet and judge, Samuel spoke the Lord's words to Israel's people. He warned them of all that would happen to their nation, their families, and their property if they chose to pursue their desires. Rather than intervening in their decision, God let them have what they wanted.

LEADER NOTE: Israel asked for a king like those of the nations around them. Samuel's speech shows that God was going to allow them to have such a king. God had provided Israel with stipulations for their kings in His law in Deuteronomy 17; however, a king like those of the nations wouldn't live up to those stipulations. Instead, he would be a "taker," as the text makes clear. The word "take" is used six times, indicating the normative behavior of worldly kings.

Sometimes we are warned of the dangers of choosing worldly desires, but we follow our sinful desires anyway. From the earliest scenes of the Scriptures (Gen. 3), we see how following our own desires leads to death rather than life. We are not unlike Israel in their stubborn demand for an earthly king.

**When have you disregarded God's warning and pursued your own desires?
What was the outcome?**

As we examine Israel's choice for a king and reflect on our own tendencies, we understand that the desire to be like the world is a strong force of temptation. This was a consistent problem in Israel's life as it is in ours. Throughout the Scriptures, the call to holiness is a call both to be like God and unlike the world. As Christians, we should put off the habits and attitudes of the world and put on the habits and attitudes of Jesus (Col. 3:5-17).

What are some areas of your life more conformed to the world's ways than God's?

Samuel's speech was not encouraging. The Israelites would put their trust and hope in an earthly king, and through a series of three kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—they would learn how fragile human leadership could be. Israel, though warned, refused to listen to Samuel in spite of all the Lord had done for them (1 Sam. 8:19-20).

LEADER NOTE: Throughout the book of Judges, Israel lived a repeating cycle of sin, judgment, and rescue. After Israel felt the effects of their sin and idolatry, they "cried out" to the Lord, and the Lord would raise up a deliverer. The "cry out" at the end of Samuel's speech in 1 Samuel 8:18 recalled Israel's cries in the Judges cycle. Samuel, however, presented the impending consequences of their decision clearly. If they demanded an earthly king, the people would have to live with their decision, no matter how hard it became.

We often make similar blunders, overlooking the faithfulness of God in our lives and leaning on our own understanding rather than the Lord's (Prov. 3:5-6). And yet, the Lord still proves Himself sovereign, just, and merciful, often turning our evil to accomplish His good and perfect will.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

x

x

The Israelites wanted a human king like the other nations had even though they should have longed for the eternal King God had planned for them—Jesus Christ. God, in His mercy and love, still set that plan into motion through the line of human kings given to them.

Notes

ARRIVAL

ASK: As your group arrives, ask this ice-breaker question: “When you were a child, what is something you begged your parents for simply because your friend had one?”

CONTEXT

SAY: Just as God had foretold to Moses, the Israelites, after the period of the judges, decided they wanted to be like the other nations that had a king (Deut. 17:14). They used the excuse that Samuel's sons were not good role models as priests and judges, and they weren't (1 Sam. 8:1-5), but really they thought they knew best what they needed. They begged for a king because they were envious of the other nations around them. They believed military power under a king's command would protect them from their enemies better than trusting God for protection.

TRANSITION: Today we are going to discuss how envy can lead to foolish choices. How does a lack of contentment affect our relationships with God and others? Conversely, how does choosing to be satisfied with what we have been given by God help us to make wise choices?

RECAP

SAY: Pass out copies of **Pack Item 2: Seeing Jesus in the Kingdom.** Say: “God’s intent from the beginning was that He would be the Israelites’ King. He is, after all, ‘the King of Glory to Whom All the Earth Belongs.’ God had put His plan in motion to set the Israelites apart from all the other nations, and what distinctly set them apart was that the Lord was their King. Yet God knew they would eventually ask for an earthly king. He knew that would not be the best choice for them, but He gave them what they asked for even though their foolish request was motivated by jealousy of neighboring, godless nations. Yet despite their actions, God ultimately brought about His plan through King Jesus. Jesus Christ is ‘the King of Glory over All the Nations,’ the King all humanity needs to deliver people from sin and restore God’s creation.”

TRANSITION: From here, let's analyze Israel's foolish request motivated by envy and how we may have been guilty of the same.



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Key Concept: God sometimes allows foolishness so we recognize it.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct the group to page 20 in the Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a table with the headings “Foolish Request” and “Unintended Consequences.” Display this table on a board in the room and record the group’s findings as they discuss the Scripture text.

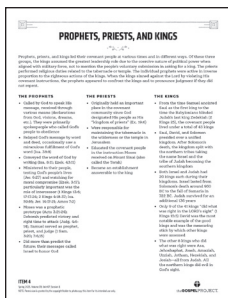
Envy and Consequences	
Using 1 Samuel 8:4-20, analyze Israel’s foolish request and the unintended consequences that resulted from it.	
FOOLISH REQUEST	UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES
ISRAELITES	
MYSELF	

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:4-9.

DISCUSS: Instruct the group to record in the space provided the request the Israelites made. Then ask: “What motivated the Israelites to demand a king, and why was that a foolish request and a ‘wrong’ demand (v. 6)? What happens when our hearts are motivated by envy or a lack of trust in God?” (*we try to take matters into our own hands; we make passive-aggressive comments to others; we demand God give us what we want*)

REFLECT: Encourage your group to think about their own lives and a request they made to God that seems foolish in retrospect. (e.g., asking God to help you pass a test you didn’t study for; praying to stay in a relationship that doesn’t honor God or could be dangerous to your physical wellbeing) Ask: “Recognizing that we have all made foolish requests of God, how can we know what requests are wise to ask of God?” In addition to answers from your group, encourage

Notes



them with the following: While we do not always know if what we are asking for is what we need, we can ask God to search and correct our hearts and motivations (see Ps. 139:23-24). Also, choosing to listen to the Lord and obey His Word leads to wisdom (Ps. 119:33-38). Jesus gives us an example of wise requests in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). When we pray, we can pray with confidence if we are asking for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:10-20.

IDENTIFY: Pass out copies of **Pack Item 4: Prophets, Priests, and Kings**. Say: “Every choice we make results in unintended consequences, whether good or bad. For example, notice in the Kings column on the handout that of the 43 rulers in Israel’s history because of their request for a king, only 9 did what was right in God’s sight, and even those 9 were inconsistent.” Ask volunteers to identify and write down the consequences for the people if they rejected the Lord’s leadership in favor of an earthly king. Then have the group write down consequences they experienced from a foolish request they made to God.

DEBRIEF

How does this passage inform the way we pray?

What are some ways we can examine our motives in prayer?


SUMMARIZE

Samuel went to the Lord when the people requested a king, and the Lord told him that the request was par for the course with the Israelites: “They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning me and worshiping other gods” (1 Sam. 8:8). Sometimes, as in the case of the Israelites, God allows us to get our foolish desires so we can see that His ways truly are better.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS


Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 21). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



 **HEAD:** For many years, Samuel had proved to be a faithful leader for Israel. Unfortunately, his sons were not faithful. One striking characteristic of Samuel's life was that he sought God's wisdom and listened to the Lord. We may not all be leaders, but we all have circles of influence for whom we can pray and model faithful prayer.

How can your prayer life positively impact the people you influence?



 **HEART:** The Israelites were envious of the nations because they had earthly kings. We too can look at how the world lives and operates and

be tempted to foolish envy. It sounds like this, “If I just had _____ like the world, my life would be great.” Yet whatever perceived deficiency between us and the world, we must remember that the Lord is more than sufficient for us.

In what areas of your life are you prone to envy the world’s resources or way of living?



HANDS: In this text, we see how worldly leadership focuses on taking rather than giving. But the true King whom God would send—Jesus, the Son of God—was Himself a gift from God (John 3:16), and He laid down His life as a ransom to save all who would believe in Him (Mark 10:45). Therefore, as Christians, our lives should be marked by what we give more than what we take.

What are some ways you can be generous in contrast with the world and point people to Jesus?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Psalm 139:23-24 and spend some time praying about your motivation in prayer. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any areas in which you have experienced envy of those around you.
- Read Matthew 6:9-13 and examine the Lord’s Prayer. Notice God’s provision, God’s power, and God’s plan. Use the Lord’s Prayer as a guide to pray each day in the next week.
- Reflect on a time you prayed for something and God said no, and later you understood why that was not best for you. Praise God for directing your steps to what you needed.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 21 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: We can be tempted to envy the world and its ways, especially if it appears like sinners enjoy a better life. However, the better life for us is not now but yet to come. Pray through Psalm 37:5-6 that your group would commit themselves to the Lord in all things.

