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# THE LOOKOUT

MAY 2021

## UNIT: History of Israel (1 Samuel & 1 Chronicles)

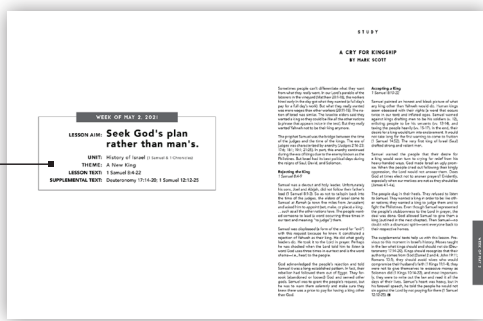
### THEME: A New King

#### OVERVIEW:

William Shakespeare wrote, "What's past is prologue." We often must look backward to move forward. This month, students will learn from Israel's past about the people's desire for a king, what happens when that king goes AWOL, the need for a new king, and the establishment of his throne in Jerusalem.

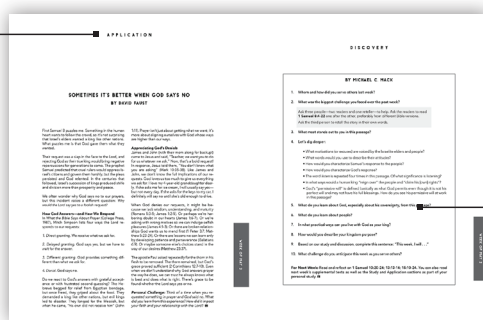
### HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF MAY 2, 2021

**LESSON AIM:** **Seek God's plan  
rather than man's.**

**UNIT:** History of Israel (1 Samuel & 1 Chronicles)

**THEME:** A New King

**LESSON TEXT:** 1 Samuel 8:4-22

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 12:12-25

## STUDY

### A CRY FOR KINGSHIP

BY MARK SCOTT

Sometimes people can't differentiate what they want from what they *really* want. In our Lord's parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), the workers hired early in the day got what they wanted (a full day's pay for a full day's work). But what they *really* wanted was more wages than other workers (20:11-15). The nation of Israel was similar. The Israelite elders said they wanted a king so they could be *like all the other nations* (a phrase that appears twice in the text). But they *really* wanted Yahweh not to be their king anymore.

The prophet Samuel was the bridge between the time of the judges and the time of the kings. The era of judges was characterized by anarchy (Judges 2:16-23; 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). In part, this anarchy continued during the era of kings due to the enemy known as the Philistines. But Israel had its best political days during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.

#### Rejecting the King

1 Samuel 8:4-9

Samuel was a devout and holy leader. Unfortunately his sons, Joel and Abijah, did not follow their father's lead (1 Samuel 8:1-3). So as not to tailspin back into the time of the judges, the elders of Israel came to Samuel at *Ramah* (a town five miles from Jerusalem) and asked him to *appoint* (set, make, or place) a king . . . *such as all the other nations have*. The people wanted someone to lead (a word occurring three times in our text and meaning "to judge") them.

Samuel was *displeased* (a form of the word for "evil") with this request because he knew it constituted a rejection of Yahweh as their king. He did what godly leaders do. He took it to the Lord in prayer. Perhaps he was shocked when the Lord told him to *listen* (a word God uses three times in our text and is the word *shama*—i.e., hear) to the people.

God acknowledged the people's rejection and told Samuel it was a long-established pattern. In fact, their rebellion had followed them out of Egypt. They forsook (abandoned or loosed) God and served *other gods*. Samuel was to grant the people's request, but he was to *warn them solemnly* and make sure they knew there was a price to pay for having a king other than God.

#### Accepting a King

1 Samuel 8:10-22

Samuel painted an honest and bleak picture of what any king other than Yahweh would do. Human kings seem obsessed with their *rights* (a word that occurs twice in our text) and inflated egos. Samuel warned against kings drafting men to be his soldiers (v. 12), enlisting people to be his servants (vv. 12-14), and taxing the people heavily (vv. 15-17). In the end, their desire for a king would turn into enslavement. It would not take long for the first warning to come to fruition (1 Samuel 14:52). The very first king of Israel (Saul) drafted strong and valiant men.

Samuel warned the people that their desire for a king would soon turn to crying for *relief* from his heavy-handed ways. God made Israel an ugly promise. When the people cried out following their kingly oppression, the Lord would not *answer* them. Does God at times elect not to answer prayers? Evidently, especially when our motives are not as they should be (James 4:1-4a).

The people dug in their heels. They *refused to listen to Samuel*. They wanted a king in order to be like other nations; they wanted a king to judge them and to fight the Philistines. Even though Samuel represented the people's stubbornness to the Lord in prayer, the deal was done. God allowed Samuel to give them a king (outlined in the next chapter). Then Samuel—no doubt with a downcast spirit—sent everyone back to their respective homes.

The supplemental texts help us with this lesson. Previous to this moment in Israel's history, Moses taught in the law what kings should and should not do (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Kings should recognize that their authority comes from God (Daniel 2 and 4; John 19:11; Romans 13:1), they should avoid wives who would compromise their husband's faith (1 Kings 11:1-4), they were not to give themselves to excessive money as Solomon did (1 Kings 10:14-22), and most importantly, they were to write out the law and read it all the days of their lives. Samuel's heart was heavy, but in his farewell speech, he told the people he would not sin against the Lord by not praying for them (1 Samuel 12:12-25). ■

## SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER WHEN GOD SAYS NO

BY DAVID FAUST

First Samuel 8 puzzles me. Something in the human heart wants to follow the crowd, so it's not surprising that Israel's elders wanted a king like other nations. What puzzles me is that God gave them what they wanted.

Their request was a slap in the face to the Lord, and rejecting God as their true king would bring negative repercussions for generations to come. The prophet Samuel predicted that cruel rulers would oppress Israel's citizens and govern them harshly, but the pleas persisted and God relented. In the centuries that followed, Israel's succession of kings produced strife and division more than prosperity and peace.

We often wonder why God says no to our prayers, but this incident *raises* a different question: *Why would the Lord say yes to a foolish request?*

### How God Answers—and How We Respond

In *What the Bible Says About Prayer* (College Press, 1987), Mitch Simpson lists four ways the Lord responds to our requests:

1. *Direct granting.* We receive what we ask for.
2. *Delayed granting.* God says yes, but we have to wait for the answer.
3. *Different granting.* God provides something different than what we ask for.
4. *Denial.* God says no.

Do we react to God's answers with grateful acceptance or with frustrated second-guessing? The Hebrews begged for relief from Egyptian bondage, but once freed, they griped about the food. They demanded a king like other nations, but evil kings led to disaster. They longed for the Messiah, but when he came, "his own did not receive him" (John

1:11). Prayer isn't just about getting what we want; it's more about aligning ourselves with God whose ways are higher than our ways.

### Appreciating God's Denials

James and John (with their mom along for backup!) came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." Now, that's a bold request! In response, Jesus told them, "You don't know what you are asking" (Mark 10:35-38). Like James and John, we don't know the full implications of our requests. God loves us too much to give us everything we ask for. I love my 4-year-old granddaughter dearly. If she asks me for ice cream, I will usually say yes—but not every day. If she asks for the keys to my car, I definitely will say no until she's old enough to drive.

When God denies our requests, it might be because we lack wisdom, understanding, and maturity (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-5). Or perhaps we're harboring doubt in our hearts (James 1:6-7). Or we're asking with wrong motives so we can indulge selfish pleasures (James 4:1-3). Or there are broken relationships God wants us to mend first (1 Peter 3:7; Matthew 5:23-24). Or there are lessons we can learn only by developing patience and perseverance (Galatians 6:9). Or maybe someone else's choices stand in the way of our desires (Matthew 23:37).

The apostle Paul asked repeatedly for the thorn in his flesh to be removed. The thorn remained, but God's grace proved sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Even when we don't understand why God answers prayer the way he does, we can trust he always knows what is best and does what is right. There's grace to be found whether the Lord says yes or no.

**Personal Challenge:** Think of a time when you requested something in prayer and God said no. What did you learn from this experience? How did it impact your faith and your relationship with the Lord? **■**

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. Whom and how did you serve others last week?
2. What was the biggest challenge you faced over the past week?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the readers to read **1 Samuel 8:4-22** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions.

Ask the third person to retell the story in their own words.

3. What most stands out to you in this passage?
4. Let's dig deeper:
  - What motivations (or excuses) are voiced by the Israelite elders and people?
  - What words would you use to describe their attitudes?
  - How would you characterize Samuel's response to the people?
  - How would you characterize God's response?
  - The word *listen* is repeated four times in this passage. Of what significance is listening?
  - In what ways would a human king "reign over" the people and "claim his [own] rights"?
  - God's "permissive will" is defined basically as what God permits even though it is not his perfect will and may not have his full blessings. How do you see his permissive will at work in this passage?
5. What do you learn about God, especially about his sovereignty, from this passage?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. In what practical ways can you live with God as your king?
8. How would you describe your kingdom purpose?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenge do you anticipate this week as you serve others?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **1 Samuel 10:20-24; 13:13-14; 15:10-24**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■