

## Grade 4—Unit 2

# Israel's First King

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In this unit, students are introduced to King Saul. They will witness his anointing by Samuel, and the pleasure the Israelites took in owning him as their king. They will go to battle against the Ammonites with Saul, experience victory, and hear Saul give the credit to God.

However, they will shortly meet another Saul, one who takes things into his own hands and becomes impatient and hungry for power. They will watch as God anoints another man, “one after God’s own heart,” to become the next king. Saul’s paranoia and jealousy of David literally destroy his life. The story ends tragically, with Saul and his three sons losing their lives in battle.

### LESSONS

1. Saul, the King God Appointed
2. Saul, the King God Rejected

# Unit 2: Israel's First King

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## Unit Information

### SUMMARY

Saul, a young man with humble beginnings, was the man God asked Samuel to anoint as king when the children of Israel begged for an earthly king. Saul was admired by the people, he was a strong leader on the battlefield, and he was successful in subduing the Ammonites. He allowed God's spirit to direct him, and gave God credit for victory.

Too soon, however, Saul's impatience drove him to lean on his own strength, offering the sacrifice when he was supposed to wait on Samuel. God gave Saul a second chance, but his hunger for power again superseded God's plan. God rejected Saul as king, and asked Samuel to anoint a new king. Most of the rest of Saul's reign was impacted by his anger over losing the throne and his jealousy toward David, the man God chose to be king.

### KEY BIBLE TEXTS

#### Lesson 1

1 Samuel 9:2; 10:23  
1 Samuel 11:1-11; 13-14  
1 Samuel 12:1-4, 12-15, 24-25  
Joshua 4:19-24

#### Lesson 2

1 Samuel 13:1-22  
1 Samuel 15:1-35  
1 Samuel 16-31

#### Lesson 3

1 Samuel 8

#### Memory Texts

1 Samuel 12:24-25  
1 Samuel 15:22-23

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### God's Plan for Prophets and Kings

God's plan for having a human king was simple. God chose the king and provided him with a prophet. The prophet acted as a counselor to the king and priests of Israel. This plan allowed the Israelites and God to remain faithful to the covenant they had established at Mount Sinai many years before. God was ultimately in charge, and would use both king and prophet as vehicles for doing the will of the Lord.

The Israelites were pleased with God's choice of Saul as king. Saul was tall and handsome, as well as capable on the battlefield. At Gilgal, Samuel publicly confirmed Saul as Israel's new leader. Gilgal was the place where the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, and where Joshua erected an altar to remind them of God's protection during the flight from Egypt. This setting reminded the Israelites of their covenant with God.

Samuel called the people of Israel to affirm their loyalty to God. He reestablished the covenant that was made at Mt. Sinai and reminded the people of what would happen if they disobeyed God. Samuel established the role of prophets when he stated that he would intercede for the people and instruct them in their covenant obligations. Samuel also acted as Saul's counselor during the early part of his reign, because the king was subject to instruction and correction by God's prophets.

### **In God's Service**

When Saul began in his role as king, Israel was embroiled in frequent battles with the Philistines. In fact, there was no peace throughout Saul's complete reign. Israel was always at war with someone. Saul struggled continually to maintain his status as a war hero and competent military strategist.

First and 2 Samuel provide information for defining Saul as a character. First, Saul referred to God as "your God" or "the Lord God." He did not call God as "my God." He did not declare a personal relationship with God. Second, his military expertise had won him great popularity with the Israelites, so he acted in ways that would continue his support with the people, and ignored God's commands. Furthermore, he failed to acknowledge God's part in victory. Finally, Saul was an impatient man, as is shown in the following account from 1 Samuel 10:

Samuel had instructed Saul to wait seven days for him at Gilgal. During this time, Saul decided to attack the Philistines. He assembled his troops at Gilgal and picked the strongest, most capable warriors for this battle. When the Philistines arrived, the Israelites' 3,000 soldiers found they were greatly outnumbered. The Philistines had 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers, and "soldiers as numerous as sand on the seashore" (1 Samuel 13:5).

Saul's armies waited for Samuel. With the passing of each day, the soldiers became more nervous, and some left the battle. Saul decided that something had to be done before his entire army deserted him. He knew that Samuel was going to prepare an offering to God when he arrived. Saul decided to offer up the sacrifice himself to ease the tension among his troops.

Saul's actions were clearly a violation of the covenant with God. When Samuel arrived, he rebuked Saul for his disobedience and told him that another king, one after God's own heart, would be raised up to take his place.

### **Keeping the Throne**

Through the rest of his reign, Saul was ridden with anxiety over the thought of being ousted by another king. He became enslaved by his desire for power and his obsession with keeping the throne.

Samuel gave Saul another opportunity to obey God's commands. Through the prophet, God gave specific instructions to Saul concerning the Amalekites. Yet Saul, consumed by his own power, followed only the commands of God that suited his purposes. He ignored instructions that might not place him in a position of honor among the people. In fact, after the Israelites conquered the Amalekites, Saul erected a statue in his own honor. Saul failed to acknowledge God as the victor.

In order to keep his popularity among the Israelites, Saul decided to take King Agag prisoner and keep all the healthy animals. He told Samuel that he had kept the animals for sacrifice to God, but God knew that Saul had ulterior motives.

Samuel informed Saul that another person, a true servant of God, had been chosen as king. Meanwhile, young David, the newly chosen king, found favor in the court of Saul. David proved himself both in battle and as a musician, and was

favored by Saul. Saul gave his daughter, Micah, to David in marriage. Later, she helped David escape from Saul's attempt to kill him.

Jonathan, Saul's son, was David's loyal companion. Jonathan's loyalty to David was proven when he helped David flee from a plot to murder him.

Saul spent the remainder of his life trying to protect his crown from David. His focus turned to killing David and promoted unchallenged aggression from the neighboring nations of Philistia and Ammon.

When Saul's attention was redirected toward Philistine aggression, he unwittingly led the Israelites into a battle they were certain to lose. Saul's three sons were killed, and Saul was injured. He took his own life to avoid being captured and tortured by the Philistines.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Honoring a covenant requires an agreement to a promise, as well as continued action and communication.
- Saul was Israel's first king.
- Saul's desire for power controlled his life, and created problems for his family and all of Israel.
- Power and other desires can keep us from following God's leading in our lives.
- God wants our trust and obedience.
- Reflection on our actions and honest communication with God are essential to daily holy living.

## WORSHIP

**1. Redecorate the worship center** to display the concepts in this unit, using memory texts, pictures, charts, posters, and maps.

**2. Include the class Bible and a prayer basket or jar** in the setting. Remind students to add prayers to the basket during the day, as the need arises.

**3. Include a theme liturgy, Scripture or prayer, and theme song** in your worship experience. Since this is a short unit, and the themes are similar, we suggest continuing to use the liturgy and song from the previous unit:

- Liturgy: Proverbs 3:1-6, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #826
- Song: "Obey my voice," HWB #163
- Another appropriate song is "Trust and obey," HWB #544

**4. Old Testament stories may raise serious questions** in children's minds. It is important that they have a place to express their thoughts in an open atmosphere. The class worship time could provide for this need. It helps to let children know that adults also have questions, and don't always have answers. But at those times, our faith helps us to trust and obey in spite of circumstances.

For example, students may have questions about God's rejection of Saul. First, help students understand that God rejected Saul as a king, not as a person. Second, they need to remember that Saul chose to disobey, so there were consequences. Last, you might point them to a Scripture such as: "I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me," Revelation 3:20.

**5. Make prayer a central part of your worship time.** Be open to the possibility of the need for confession.

- Use written prayers of confessing and reconciling. *Hymnal: A Worship Book* has a number of these prayers, beginning with #690. Also, selections for confession and reconciliation begin with #128 in *Sing the Journey*.
- Students may choose to place prayers in the prayer basket. If these prayers are read in the group, openly thank God for forgiveness, and for students who seek to obey God.
- Classrooms are fertile ground for disputes and arguments. They are also places where reconciliation and forgiveness can be modeled and taught. Prayers of petition and thanksgiving are important parts of this instruction.

### **MEMORY PASSAGE**

There are two focus texts for this unit, 1 Samuel 12:24-25 and 1 Samuel 15:22-23. They are used to make application to daily living a most important part of the lesson. Memorization is not an expectation.

### **ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING**

The two lessons in this unit primarily involve discussion. Observe your students carefully, to make sure they are absorbing the lesson content. Assess their listening and discussing skills.

Several “Extend the Lesson” activities can be used as assessments. The art and writing activities encourage individual ability and creativity. The unit concludes with a formal unit assessment.

# Israel's First King

## LESSON 1: SAUL, THE KING GOD APPOINTED

### Objective

Students will observe that Saul's kingship was successful when he obeyed God's covenant.

### Key Concepts

- Gilgal was historically significant to the people of Israel.
- The Israelites were pleased with Saul as king.
- God's power through Saul gave victory over the Ammonites.
- Samuel admonished the people and bade them farewell as their leader.

**Text:** Joshua 4:19-24; 1 Samuel 9:2; 1 Samuel 10:23; 1 Samuel 11:1-11, 13-14; 1 Samuel 12:1-4, 12-15, 24-25

**Memory Text:** 1 Samuel 12:24-25

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40-45 minutes

### Materials

- Bibles
- Transparency or projection of map of Gilgal, Jabesh Gilead, and Bezek (p. 84)
- "Saul #1" (p. 85)
- Transparency or projection of memory text (p. 87)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: poster board (1 per student), art supplies

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the Biblical background for this unit, along with 1 Samuel 9 through 12. Read the lesson. Decide what Bible content, if any, you will need to fill in, to tie the lesson parts together.
- Make copies of "Saul #1," one per student.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Review Unit 1**, reminding the students that Israel had begged for an earthly king, and God agreed to give them one. Tell them the title of Unit 2. Emphasize Saul's name. Then explain that when we learn new Bible stories, it is important to remember how they connect to stories, so you are going to take a brief look at a story in Joshua.

Have students find Joshua 4:19-24 in their Bibles. Read the passage to them, and ask these questions:

1. What happened in this story? *(Make sure they understand the Jordan River experience and Red Sea experience are similar. Joshua wants the people to make this connection and remember, from generation to generation, God's goodness. This place also reminds the people of their covenant with God.)*
2. Where did this story take place? *(The place is Gilgal. Use the map from p. 84 to show the location.)*

3. This place is significant in today's lesson. What do you think might happen here? *(Give children time to speculate, but do not tell the answer. The answer: It is the place of Saul's public affirmation as king.)*

## **LESSON STEPS**

**1. "Saul #1."** Using the activity sheet, help students search the biblical references to define Saul's character. You may need to add some skipped detail so the story line connects sufficiently. *(Scriptures are given on the activity sheet and answer key.)*

Read or tell in your own words each Scripture, and discuss the questions that relate to it. *(Remember to point out Jabesh-Gilead and Bezek on the map, when discussing the story of the Ammonites near invasion.)* Students should write answers to the questions throughout your discussion.

**2. Samuel's farewell.** 1 Samuel 12:1-4, 12-15, and 24-25 record Samuel's farewell speech to the people of Israel. Students should read the passages and find six things Samuel told the people they must do to continue a good relationship with God. Complete this part of the activity sheet. *(These are found in the 12-15 and 24-25 passages. Answers are on the activity sheet answer key.)*

**3. Draw conclusions.** Was Saul a follower of God? Work together to draw conclusions about the character of Saul based on the students' findings. Have students support their conclusions with Scripture. *(See activity sheet and answer key.)*

## **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)*

- **Write the memory text.** The memory verses are 1 Samuel 12:24-25. Have students rewrite the text in first person as a way to remember the words. *(Example: I must fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all my heart. I will consider what great things he has done for me. If I persist in doing evil, I will be swept away.)*
- **Make posters.** Have students make posters of the characteristics of a follower of God, according to 1 Samuel 12:12-15 and 24-25. Title the posters "Followers of God." Students can take their posters home to put on their bulletin boards. One should be placed in the worship center. Encourage students to be creative with color and design. *(Characteristics: Fear God, serve God, obey God, keep God's commands, follow God, consider the great things God has done for you)*

# Map of Gilgal, Jabesh Gilead, and Bezek



# Saul #1

*1 Samuel 9:2, 1 Samuel 10:23, 1 Samuel 11:1-11*

What three characteristics of Saul did the people of Israel like?

\_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 11:1-11, 1 Samuel 13*

The leaders sent messengers to \_\_\_\_\_ for help. The \_\_\_\_\_ came upon Saul in great \_\_\_\_\_. Saul sent messengers throughout Israel to require everyone to follow \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Saul gathered the army of \_\_\_\_\_ men at \_\_\_\_\_. The next day, the \_\_\_\_\_ experienced a great \_\_\_\_\_ over the \_\_\_\_\_. Saul said, "This day the \_\_\_\_\_ has rescued Israel."



*1 Samuel 11:14*

Samuel's choice of \_\_\_\_\_ as the setting to confirm Saul as king reminded the people of their \_\_\_\_\_ with God.

*1 Samuel 12:1-4, 12-15, 20-25*

Samuel admonished the people and gave them a list of six things they must do to stay in relationship with God. Write down the list.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Draw a Conclusion

Was Saul a follower of God? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Look at the information you discovered in the Scripture search. Support your conclusion with at least three ideas from Scripture.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWER KEY

# Saul #1

1 Samuel 9:2, 1 Samuel 10:23, 1 Samuel 11:1-11

What three characteristics of Saul did the people of Israel like?

tall handsome capable on battlefield

1 Samuel 11:1-11, 1 Samuel 13

The leaders sent messengers to Saul for help. The Spirit of God came upon Saul in great power. Saul sent messengers throughout Israel to require everyone to follow Saul and Samuel. Saul gathered the army of 330,000 men at Bezek. The next day, the Israelites experienced a great victory over the Ammonites. Saul said, "This day the Lord has rescued Israel."



1 Samuel 11:14

Samuel's choice of Gilgal as the setting to confirm Saul as king reminded the people of their covenant with God.

1 Samuel 12:1-4, 12-15, 20-25

Samuel admonished the people and gave them a list of six things they must do to stay in relationship with God. Write down the list.

<u>Fear God</u>	<u>Keep God's commands</u>
<u>Serve God</u>	<u>Follow the Lord</u>
<u>Obey God</u>	<u>Consider what God has done for you</u>

## Draw a Conclusion

Was Saul a follower of God? X yes      no

Look at the information you discovered in the Scripture search. Support your conclusion with at least three ideas from Scripture.

1. The Spirit of God came on Saul, because Saul allowed God to lead.
2. God won the battle for the Israelites, because they were keeping God's commands.
3. Saul gave God the credit for the victory.



Only fear the LORD,  
and serve him faithfully  
with all your heart;  
for consider what great things  
he has done for you.  
But if you still do wickedly,  
you shall be swept away,  
both you and your king.

1 Samuel 12: 24-25

# Israel's First King

## LESSON 2: SAUL, THE KING GOD REJECTED

### Objective

Students will observe the demise of Saul, when he did not obey his covenant with the Lord.

### Key Concepts

- Saul disobeyed God's commands and trusted in his own power.
- Saul's disobedience lost him the throne.
- Saul was consumed with jealousy.
- God wants our first allegiance.
- Obedience to God is essential for daily living.

**Text:** 1 Samuel 13:1-22; 1 Samuel 15:1-35; 1 Samuel 16-31

**Memory text:** 1 Samuel 15:22-23

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40-45 minutes

### Materials

- Bibles
- Chart paper
- "Good Intentions, Bad Results" (pp. 90-91)
- "Saul's Second Chance" (pp. 92-94)
- "Consumed by Power" (pp. 95-96)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: transparency or projection of memory text (p. 97), "1 Samuel 15:22-23" activity sheet (p. 98)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: poster board, art supplies

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the Bible background for this unit and 1 Samuel, chapters 13-31, to gain an overall perspective of Saul during the latter part of his reign.
- Prepare a chart, with the headings Saul #1 and Saul #2, for Introduce the Lesson. You will use the chart throughout the lesson, as you discover the traits of Saul #2. Fold the paper in half, lengthwise. On one side write Saul #1 at the top. On the other, write Saul #2. Post the chart in the front of the classroom.
- Make copies of the stories, "Good Intentions, Bad Results" and "Saul's Second Chance," one of each for every 2 students. (*Make two-sided copies and save for next year.*) You will be reading the third story, "Consumed by Power," so the students will not need copies.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Review Saul #1** with the class by making a list of adjectives, verbs, and nouns that describe him. (*Ask students to recall what the Bible said about Saul. Otherwise, they may simply list valuable character traits without giving thought to reviewing the character of Saul.*) Write their words or phrases on the left side of the chart.

*(Examples: faithful, servant, obedient, credited God for victory, humble, brave, loyal to God, leadership, etc.)*

Explain that in today's lesson, they will be meeting Saul #2. Ask several questions such as: Do you think Saul #1 and Saul #2 are the same person? Do you think they will be different or alike? How will they be different or alike? *(Do not provide answers to these questions. Let the students speculate.)*

## **LESSON STEPS**

**1. Readers' Theater 1.** Hand out copies of the story, "Good Intentions, Bad Results." *(Choose two expressive readers to read the parts of Saul and Jonathan. You can read the part of the narrator.)* Before beginning, tell the students you will be reading a story where Saul #2 is the main character. If they hear something in the story that helps to define his character they should raise their hands.

*Note:* When a student raises a hand, stop and discuss the student's idea. If he/she has an appropriate answer, phrase it into a character trait and write it on the right side of the chart. *(Example: In Saul's second speech, he comments that he is frustrated. He also blames the situation on Samuel, rather than taking responsibility himself. "Frustrated," "blaming," or "irresponsible" might be entries on the chart.)*

**2. Readers' Theater 2.** Hand out copies of the second story, "Saul's Second Chance." *(Choose two able readers to read the parts of Saul and Samuel. Students who can read expressively will give life to these stories. Again, you should read the part of the narrator.)* Continue as in step 1.

**3. "Consumed by Power."** You will read this story to the class. This time, the students do not have scripts on which to focus, so have them take out a sheet of paper and a pencil. Explain that you will read the last story to them, and you want them to jot down the character traits of Saul that they hear. They should be able to identify five to ten traits.

**4. Discuss the story,** focusing on the question, "What happened?" The emphasis should be that Saul's life became a shambles when he turned from trusting and obeying God to seeking power for himself. Saul #1 was a follower of God. Not so with Saul #2. You might ask the students to make a summary statement together, beginning like this: "Saul's life has taught me . . ." *(Example: God wants to be first in my life, and he wants me to trust and obey him completely.)*

## **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)*

- **Display the memory text.** Hand out the activity sheet titled "1 Samuel 15:22-23" and have the students complete it.

- **Create posters** with symbols that show the contrast between dependence on God's power within us and dependence on our own power. *(Example: GOD'S POWER, with the word "joy" written in creative lettering, with a dove on the tip of the J, and OUR POWER, with a ball and chain.)* Have students divide their posters in half, write the two titles, and draw their symbols. Other ideas: add the words from the Saul #1, Saul #2 chart to the poster; add the summary statement from the discussion part of the lesson. Encourage creativity!

# Good Intentions, Bad Results

Based on 1 Samuel 13:1-22

**Saul:** Who does he think he is, anyway?

**Narrator:** Saul mumbled after the figure disappearing over the horizon. Jonathan looked up from polishing his sword and grinned.

**Jonathan:** What are you mumbling about now, Father?

**Narrator:** His eyes smiled at his father's frowning face.

**Saul:** Oh, that Samuel. He can be so frustrating at times! I can never do anything right, as far as he's concerned. This wouldn't have happened if he would have come yesterday. Where was he, anyway?

**Narrator:** Saul carefully placed the goat back onto the altar and rested against a rock. He wasn't sure what to do. If he finished sacrificing the goat, would God look upon Israel favorably? But if he stopped now, what chance did Israel have of defeating the Philistine troops?

**Jonathan:** Samuel's not such a bad guy. He only wants you to do what God wants. After all, he told you he would come and make the offering to God. You just got a little impatient, that's all.

**Saul:** That's easy for you to say, my son. Just look at all those Philistines breathing down our necks! You didn't hear the latest report. Did you know they have 3,000 chariots? We're no match for that! Why, only you and I have swords, since the Philistines took over our ironsmith shops. Everyone else is reduced to fighting with bows and arrow or slingshots. No wonder the men are thinking of deserting the troops! Without God on our side, we'll be mincemeat!

**Narrator:** The king shook his head and shuddered as he talked.

**Saul:** I did what I had to do, Jonathan. During my life, I've learned one thing. Sometimes you have to take matters into your own hands. Why, if I had waited for Samuel to get here, more soldiers would have run away. They're scared, Jonathan. And I don't blame them. We are in grave danger, my boy! I don't know how we're going to get out of this mess.

**Narrator:** Jonathan placed his sword in the sheath at his side.

**Jonathan:** Did you explain it all to Samuel? I'm sure he would understand if you told him why you began sacrificing the goat yourself instead of waiting for him.

**Narrator:** Saul sank to the ground with a sigh.

**Saul:** You think he'd understand, do you? Well, here's understanding for you—that old prophet called me a fool! He told me I had sinned against God by not obeying God's command. And to top it off, Samuel told me my kingdom would not endure.

**Jonathan:** What in the world does that mean? Why are you talking in riddles, Father?

**Narrator:** Saul stood next to his son and put his arm around his shoulder.

**Saul:** Well, Jonathan, it's pretty simple. Samuel says if I had waited for him to come, God would have rewarded my obedience by making sure that my son and his sons would be kings after me. Kingship would have been a family affair. But, since I disobeyed and tried to do things in my own strength . . .

**Jonathan:** Your son will not be the next king?

**Narrator:** He nodded the answer to his own question, leaning close to his forlorn father. As Jonathan tried to comfort Saul, they noticed small bands of soldiers leaving the safety of the city to return to their homes under cover of the night's darkness. Jonathan made his way to the nearest guard post to ask about the deserters. Saul, looking at the Philistine camp, squared his jaw and straightened his shoulders.

**Saul:** I'll show you, Samuel. You say you have found someone else to be king—a man after the Lord's heart.

**Narrator:** He turned and looked to the north, where the rest of the tribes were scattered.

**Saul:** Just let him try to take my crown away! When he comes, I'll be ready. And tell those Philistines and Ammonites they'd better not mess with Saul. I AM ISRAEL'S ONE AND ONLY KING!

**The End**

# Saul's Second Chance

Based on 1 Samuel 15:1-35

**Saul:** Am I glad to see you, Samuel!

**Narrator:** Saul cheerfully greeted the elderly prophet as he walked toward his fortress in the desert.

**Saul:** It's been too long, dear man! Come and rest. You must be weary from your long trip.

**Narrator:** Samuel took Saul's extended hand, looking into his eyes as he spoke.

**Samuel:** I came here for a reason, Saul. I bring you a message from the Lord. Are you ready to listen?

**Narrator:** The memory of the prophet's words at Gath was fresh in Saul's mind.

**Saul:** Of course, Samuel. What does your God request of me? I am willing to serve.

**Narrator:** The prophet looked sternly into Saul's eyes.

**Samuel:** Did you hear that the Amalekites ambushed some Israelites when they were returning from Egypt?

**Narrator:** When Saul nodded in affirmation, Samuel continued.

**Samuel:** God wants to punish them for killing his people. Go and attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them.

**Saul:** No problem, Samuel! That won't be hard to do. The Amalekites are no match for us, when we're organized. My army is much stronger now that I have handpicked most of the soldiers. Why, we might even take on the Philistines one day soon!

**Narrator:** Saul began pacing the floor in excitement.

**Samuel:** Saul, did you hear what I said? God wants to punish the Amalekites. Do you understand God's request?

**Narrator:** Samuel folded his arms in anticipation. He received no response. Saul called for his closest advisors and began making plans to assemble his troops. This time, Israel was sure to show all nations what a great and powerful people they were! They had at least 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men from Judah. Samuel cleared his throat. Saul turned toward the aging priest.

**Saul:** See, Samuel? Just let me at them! I am ready and willing to do all that you asked. I'll crush those Amalekites! I'll show them who's boss. They won't even know what hit them!

**Narrator:** Saul's jubilation was impossible for Samuel to bear.

**Samuel:** Listen to God, Saul. And listen well. Do not spare anything. Destroy everything that belongs to the Amalekites. Leave nothing alive—not even their sheep, camels, or donkeys. Obey the word of the Lord.

**Narrator:** Samuel turned, leaving Saul to wonder at the distrust in the prophet's voice. Within that week, the Israelites ambushed the Amalekites with vigor. The surprised people were no match for Saul's strong army. Soon Saul captured Agag, the Amalekite king. He ordered his troops to kill all the rest of the people and all the weak animals, but he told them to bring back any strong and healthy animals to his fortress. The soldiers did all that Saul commanded, for he was their king.

When Samuel learned of Saul's actions, he was greatly troubled. Once again, Saul had disobeyed God's instructions. Samuel sunk to his knees and wailed throughout the night.

Early in the morning, Samuel began searching for Saul. Finding Saul was more painful than Samuel had imagined. Saul had built a monument in his own honor in the city of Carmel. Samuel was enraged. He stood solidly in the middle of the town, waiting for the jubilant Saul to notice his presence.

When Saul saw the prophet, he greeted him with a joyous shriek.

**Saul:** The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions!

**Narrator:** Samuel responded quietly.

**Samuel:** What then, is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle I hear?

**Narrator:** Saul quickly explained that they had taken the best sheep and cattle as a sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel, shocked at Saul's response, silenced him.

**Samuel:** Why did you disobey the Lord?

**Saul:** But I obeyed the Lord! I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag, their king. The soldiers took the best sheep and cattle from the plunder in order to sacrifice them to the Lord, your God, at Gilgal. What have I done wrong now, Samuel? I obeyed God and obliterated the Amalekites, so what's the big deal?

**Samuel:** Oh, Saul. Don't you understand? To obey is better than to sacrifice. Did you do all that God asked?

**Narrator:** Samuel's eyes narrowed as he asked this last question. Saul stroked his chin as he considered his reply.

**Saul:** I did defeat the Amalekites. But I didn't do everything God told me to do. I was afraid of the people, so I gave in to them. I thought they would be disappointed if I didn't return with some animals and at least one king. Please forgive my sin. Come back with me and help me worship the Lord.

**Narrator:** A crowd began to gather as Saul pleaded with Samuel.

**Samuel:** You have rejected the word of the Lord, Saul. The Lord now rejects you as king of Israel!

**Narrator:** As Samuel spoke, he turned to walk away. Saul grabbed Samuel's robe, trying to stop him. The crowd gasped in horror as the prophet's robe tore.

**Samuel:** Let this be a lesson to you, Saul. The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today. The God of Israel does not lie. Nor does God change his mind.

**Narrator:** Tension filled the air. Saul pleaded with Samuel to return with him, so that they could worship God together and discuss this situation in the privacy of his fortress. Samuel finally agreed to return with Saul. The journey was long and silent. Once the fortress was in sight, Samuel spoke to Saul.

**Samuel:** Go at once, and bring King Agag of the Amalekites to me.

**Narrator:** Saul, thinking that Samuel wanted to reward him for capturing such a powerful man, arranged a feast in his honor to be held after Samuel's meeting with the prisoner king.

**Saul:** Things are finally going my way.

**Narrator:** Saul muttered to himself as he walked through the corridor to his chamber.

**Saul:** Samuel surely has come to bless me and my family. He has forgiven me for not following the instructions of his God. I will bathe and prepare myself to worship the Lord God.

**Narrator:** Several hours passed before Saul had scrubbed enough to feel prepared to worship God. His excitement mounted as he rushed through the long halls of the fortress. At the door of Samuel's room, Saul paused to straighten his garments. He heard the anguished cries of a man pleading for his life. Saul listened as Samuel sentenced King Agag to death. Fear gripped Saul's heart. Somehow he knew that things would never be the same again.

After Agag was taken from Samuel's room, Saul quietly opened the door. He worshiped God in the presence of Samuel, in hopes that God would intervene for him. When the feast was ready, Saul invited Samuel to take a seat as the most honored guest. Samuel looked at Saul with tears in his eyes.

**Samuel:** I have done all that the Lord instructed. There is nothing more I can do.

**Narrator:** He laid his right hand lightly on Saul's shoulder and abruptly left the room.

Saul didn't eat much at the feast that night. His appetite was gone. He went to bed with the knowledge that he would never see Samuel again. Somewhere in Israel lurked a man who was anointed to take over his throne. And Samuel was on that man's side! There was only one thing left to do.

**Saul:** I will focus my energies on staying in power.

**Narrator:** Saul mumbled as he drifted off to a troubled sleep.

**Saul:** Whatever I have to do . . .

**The End**

# Consumed by Power

“Get in here, Doeg!” Saul’s voice echoed in the windowless room. “Where are you when I need you?” Doeg, breathless from rushing in from the flock, lowered his eyes to the floor. He knew that to speak during one of the king’s tirades would cause an even greater uproar.

Saul paced the floor as his violent temper raged. “Doeg, you hear the talk of the people when you are out tending my flocks. What do they say about me? Do they think me mad?”

There was a long silence as Doeg considered his response. “I haven’t heard anyone say that you’re crazy, if that’s what you’re asking. But . . .” Saul’s head shepherd weighed each word as he spoke. “People are wondering . . . why you want to . . . uh . . . kill David.” The weather-beaten shepherd moved backward, just out of Saul’s reach.

“David, David, David! His name echoes in my ears from morning to night. Will I ever be rid of that festering sore?” King Saul’s jealousy consumed him. His anger erupted as he listed the wrongs David had committed against him. “I gave him everything, Doeg—everything a man could want. First, I gave him a fine place to live and royal clothes. I treated him like a son . . . like part of my family. And what did he do? Turned them against me, that’s what! In front of my very eyes!”

Saul continued his frenzy. He recounted Jonathan’s friendship with David and his success in helping David escape. When he began telling of Micah’s loyalty to her new husband, Saul began wailing and beating his chest. “She was supposed to report everything to me! She wasn’t supposed to love David more than me! How could that happen? I am her *father!*”

Doeg moved into the far corner of the room, hoping to remain unnoticed. “David stole the hearts of my children. So sad . . . so sad!”

The anguished king sank to the floor. He was exhausted. Night after night, sleep evaded him as thoughts of revenge flashed through his mind. Quietly, Doeg tiptoed to the door. “Oh, Doeg, don’t leave me. Are you not loyal to your king?” Saul managed to raise his weary body by leaning against his royal chair.

“You have my loyalty, King Saul. And the loyalty of my son and his sons after him. I just thought you might like to be alone.” Doeg stood meekly beside the door and held out his right arm in compassion. The broken king steadied himself against Doeg’s arm. The kindly shepherd guided him to the front of the chair. Once seated, Saul’s expression changed.

“Doeg, did I tell you that he stole my family?” The king grabbed the shepherd’s shoulders and gazed into his face.

“Yes, my king, you told me.” Doeg’s voice was low. “Why did you call me here, King Saul?” The peasant pulled his chair nearer the king. He leaned toward Saul in an attempt to hear his quiet ramblings.

“We need a plan. Yes, a plan.”

“A plan for what, my mighty king? The flocks are watered regularly and the sheep are well fed.” Doeg’s response prompted another surge of anger from Saul.

“That David! We simply must do something with David! Not only did he steal my family, but he stole the hearts of all Israel! Don’t think I don’t hear the whispering of the women when they draw water from the well. I have spies all over this vast land! How many times have I heard them chant, ‘Saul has slain his thousand and David his ten thousands.’” Saul’s lips repeated the chant over and over again. Doeg stood silently, waiting for the king to return to reality.

Several minutes passed. Saul became aware of Doeg's presence once again. "Sir, what do you want me to do?" Doeg hoped his question would move this conference closer to an end.

"Protect your king! Don't you see what he's doing? David wants to be king! David must be the one that Samuel anointed. Everything he does works out for his benefit and brings me closer to my demise. God is clearly with David and . . ." Saul's voice broke. "God is clearly with David and no longer with me. We must get rid of him, once and for all!"

Doeg's puzzled expression prompted Saul to continue. "Three times he has had opportunity to kill me. And three times, David has kept me alive. How many more times will he keep from grabbing the throne? David wants my throne. I know it!"

Saul leaped from the chair and began thrashing his arms wildly. Doeg, concerned for the king's safety, managed to sneak from the room unnoticed. Saul continued his bitter ramblings, while Doeg looked for someone to help placate the jealous king.

"The witch of Endor has told me that I will die tomorrow. David must be killed before daybreak! I must get to him before he gets to me! I am Israel's king! I want Jonathan to be the next king! The line of kings must come through *me!*" With those words, King Saul's head dropped. His sobs echoed in the fortress halls. The broken king rocked back and forth on his chair with his head in his hands.

Abner, Saul's cousin, found him in this state when he entered the room. He placed his hands firmly on the king's shoulders and looked deep into his eyes. "Saul, listen to me. The Philistines are preparing an attack at Mount Gilboa. You must focus on battle plans. We must go at once."

Saul took a deep breath and sighed. "I'll show them who's king!" he muttered between clenched teeth.



**A**nd Samuel said,  
"Has the LORD as great delight in  
burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in  
obedience to the voice of the LORD?  
Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to heed than the fat of rams.  
For rebellion is no less a sin than divination,  
and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry.  
Because you have rejected  
the word of the LORD,  
he has also rejected you from being king."

1 Samuel 15:22-23

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# 1 Samuel 15:22-23

This memory passage tells us two things in which the Lord delights. List them on the lines below.

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The passage also names two things the Lord hates. List them below.

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The end of the passage tells us the reason the Lord rejected Saul as king. What is it?

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Use the ideas in this passage to write a letter to God about your relationship with God.

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**ANSWER KEY**

# 1 Samuel 15:22-23

This memory passage tells us two things in which the Lord delights. List them on the lines below.

*Obey the voice of the Lord*

*Heed the Lord's instructions*

The passage also names two things the Lord hates. List them below.

*Rebellion*

*Arrogance*

The end of the passage tells us the reason the Lord rejected Saul as king. What is it?

*"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord"*

Use the ideas in this passage to write a letter to God about your relationship with God.

*Example:*

*Dear God,*

*I have read about King Saul. In his story, I have learned about your desires for me.*

*I want to tell you that I will obey your voice and heed your instructions. I will not*

*be rebellious when you show me what you want me to do. I will not be arrogant and*

*act like my way is better than your way. I will read your holy word and follow what*

*it tells me to do. I know that you will not reject me if I trust you and obey you.*

*With all my love,*

*(Name)*



# Israel's First King

## Unit 2 Assessment

### Part 1

*Directions: Choose one word or phrase from the list to complete each sentence. Write your choice in the blank.*

Joshua	victory	Jabesh Gilead
tall	Saul	handsome
Samuel	Gilgal	trust and obey
God	covenant	skillful in battle

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first king of Israel.
2. The people liked Saul because he was \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. During the reign of Saul, \_\_\_\_\_ was the prophet.
4. Saul was confirmed as king in public at \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Samuel's choice of a place to confirm Saul as king was important to the Israelites, because this was the place where \_\_\_\_\_ had erected an altar to God. It also reminded the people of their \_\_\_\_\_ with God.
6. The people at \_\_\_\_\_ were threatened by the Ammonites.
7. Saul's army was successful in defeating the Ammonites. Saul gave credit to \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. God expects God's people to \_\_\_\_\_ him.

### Part 2

*Directions: Fill in the blanks for the following two questions.*

9. 1 Samuel 12:24-25 is one memory text for this unit. Find it in your Bible, and then answer this question. If you follow the advice of this Scripture, what three things will you do?

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10. 1 Samuel 15:22-23 is the other memory text. Find it in your Bible, and complete the sentences.

- The Lord is delighted when we \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- The Lord hates \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## ANSWER KEY

# Israel's First King

## Unit 2 Assessment

### Part 1

Directions: Choose one word or phrase from the list to complete each sentence. Write your choice in the blank.

Joshua	victory	Jabesh Gilead
tall	Saul	handsome
Samuel	Gilgal	trust and obey
God	covenant	skillful in battle

1. Saul was the first king of Israel.
2. The people liked Saul because he was tall, handsome, and skillful in battle.
3. During the reign of Saul, Samuel was the prophet.
4. Saul was confirmed as king in public at Gilgal.
5. Samuel's choice of a place to confirm Saul as king was important to the Israelites, because this was the place where Joshua had erected an altar to God. It also reminded the people of their covenant with God.
6. The people at Jabesh Gilead were threatened by the Ammonites.
7. Saul's army was successful in defeating the Ammonites. Saul gave credit to God for the victory.
8. God expects God's people to trust and obey him.

### Part 2

Directions: Fill in the blanks for the following two questions.

9. 1 Samuel 12:24-25 is one memory text for this unit. Find it in your Bible, and then answer this question. If you follow the advice of this Scripture, what three things will you do?  
Fear the Lord  
Serve God faithfully  
Consider what God has done for me
10. 1 Samuel 15:22-23 is the other memory text. Find it in your Bible, and complete the sentences.
  - The Lord is delighted when we obey the voice of the Lord and heed God's word.
  - The Lord hates rebellion and arrogance.