



Session 11

Fall 2015

Early Childhood

Saul becomes king

1 SAMUEL 8:1-10:25

prepare

PRAYER

Wise God, you can see what humans cannot see—the potential of each person to do great things. Help me to see the gifts of these children and nurture them. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To ponder stories of God's call

STORY SUMMARY

The people of Israel wanted a king. God told Samuel to anoint the person sent to him. While looking for his father's lost donkeys, Saul met Samuel. Samuel told Saul that he was the one the people had been looking for. Saul claimed to be too insignificant but Samuel anointed him and told him to expect a series of signs from God. The people celebrated the selection of Saul even when Saul hid from them.



teaching tips for early childhood

Children love to pretend to be kings and queens, princes and princesses, or superheroes. Today's session shows that God is not interested in wealth, power, or prestige, but chooses ordinary people to do God's work. Like Gideon, Saul wondered why he would be chosen, since he was from the least of the tribes and the humblest of families. Samuel reassured Saul that God was with him. Offer children the same encouragement: No matter where we go or what happens, God is with us.

Decide which Explore activities you will do. Make one copy of page 91 in this guide for each child. The donkeys will be used in Explore (Create and Move). The Samuel and Crowd story puppets are used as storytelling props and then can be placed in each child's Story folder from the Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet for later use. Check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared. Go to www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras to find tips for working with younger children.

Asking for a king

In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel come to Samuel as he is holding judgment at Ramah. They complain that he is old and his sons are not qualified to lead them. They demand a king like the nations around them. Israel had been led by individuals appointed by God for periods of time, but had not had a dynastic succession of leadership through one family. The people seem to be mainly concerned about military leadership. This is something that the judges, through the power and intervention of God, had always provided in the past. Perhaps the persistent and powerful Philistines had made the people think they needed something different.

Now they ask for a king, and God gives them Saul. There is a nice pun in Hebrew: the verb *shal* means "to ask for" and Saul's name in Hebrew is *Shaul*, "the one asked for." They asked for a king, and received the one asked for. In many ways, Saul was what the people wanted: a young, handsome, tall man from a wealthy family. To all outward appearances, he was what a king should be.

The anointing of Saul

As the story unfolds, Saul is on a journey to find his father's lost donkeys. God reveals to Samuel that Saul will be coming to him and that Samuel is to anoint him as king; then Saul will deliver the Israelites from the Philistines who have oppressed them. When Samuel makes this announcement, Saul resists. Samuel, however, continues and anoints Saul privately as king. Samuel predicts that Saul will experience prophetic activity and "be turned into a different person" (literally, "be turned to another individual"). He gives Saul additional specific instructions. God then gives Saul "another heart" (literally, "turned to him another heart"), and Saul has a prophetic frenzy with a group of prophets. When the people arrive to make Saul king, Saul cannot be found. He is hiding in the baggage! The text is not



clear whether this is out of humility or fear. Nevertheless, when the people see him, the narrator again comments on Saul's height, and the people proclaim him king. Saul is then joined by warriors "whose hearts God had touched," although others reject him.² Saul's response in this case is to remain silent, exhibiting restraint toward those who threaten his authority.³ It is clear from this story that Saul begins well: he exhibits humility; he is obedient to the prophetic word; he has been changed by God; individuals who have been assembled by God support him; and he refuses to retaliate against those who threaten him.

Postscript: the biblical critique of kingship

In chapter 15, Saul will disobey Samuel and lie to cover it up. In that story he is, perhaps, greedy, and certainly proud. He will repent but the narrator does not seem to put much stock in the sincerity of that repentance. And, in contrast to his earlier attitude, Saul will repeatedly attempt to eliminate the new threat to his throne: the rising, young giant-killer, David. The Bible has a negative view of human kingship: God is the only king and the Israelites make a poor decision when they install a king they can see. They fail to trust God and instead depend on human ability. This view echoes throughout the books of Psalms and Isaiah. Yet God uses kingship to advance God's purposes, even if found expressions of hope that God brings good out of evil, as found in both Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28.

1. 1 Samuel 8:20.
 2. 1 Samuel 10:26-27.
 3. Saul's restraint is demonstrated again in chapter 11:12-13 when the people suggest that those who did not think Saul should be king should be put to death, and Saul refuses.

gather

supplies

- *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
- CD player
- *Hineni* sign (from Additional resources, used in session 10)

resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)

to do

- If you did not do so in session 10, copy the *Hineni* sign from page 90.

media connections

- *God Knows All About Me* by Kate Toms
- *God Is with Me through the Day* and *God Is with Me through the Night* by Julie Cantrell
- Image search for "Saul anointed king"
- Internet search for "curly paper crown" instructions

BUILD COMMUNITY

Hold up the *Hineni* sign from page 90 in this guide. Ask if the children remember the Bible word they learned in the last session: *hineni*, which means "Here I am." If some children were not present last time, teach them how to pronounce the word (hah-nen'-ee). As you call the children's names one by one, encourage children to respond by saying, "*Hineni*," or "Here I am."

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd" from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 20. Sing "God Is with Us" from the CD, track 12. Lyrics for songs are at the back of this guide.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Repeat the Spiritual practice from session 10. Using a whispering voice, ask children to be very still and quiet so they can listen to God. Close your eyes. Pray:

God, you are with us. We are listening to you. (Pause for ten to fifteen seconds of silence.) Amen.

teaching tip

Saying children's names is a helpful way to encourage friendships between children and make each person feel welcome. This is particularly important whenever a child is visiting. Take extra time to introduce the visitor. Say the other children's names frequently throughout the session to help the visitor connect with the group.

Bible memory

Draw attention to the Bible memory poster. Stand and say the memory verse together, using the motions from the last session.

Make me to know your ways (touch finger to head),
O Lord (hold hands upward);
teach me (pretend to open a book)
your paths (walk in place).
—Psalm 25:4

SHARE THE STORY

Lay the prepared Story folder (see 'To do') on the floor or table in front of you. Have the Saul story puppet from a Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet ready, as well as the Samuel and Crowd story puppets from page 91 in this guide.

Tell the story, which is found on the back of the story picture in the resource pack. Follow the instructions there for moving the props.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Slowly read the following wondering questions, holding up the indicated story puppet. Children may want to share their thoughts aloud.

- (Hold up Samuel story puppet.) I wonder why Samuel didn't want the people to have a king at first.

- (Hold up Saul story puppet.) I wonder why God chose Saul to be king.

- (Turn Saul story puppet so the anointing scene is showing.) Imagine being anointed with oil.

- (Hold up Crowd story puppet.) I wonder how the people felt about Saul being their king.

Give each child an Early Childhood leaflet, open to page 2. Complete the maze. For page 3, demonstrate how to pull the strip through the slit to show Saul being anointed with oil and then crowned as king. Children can color the picture.

PEACE NOTES

Saul was reluctant to become king, even going so far as to hide from the people. Samuel reassured Saul that God was with him.

Say:

We can feel God's peace inside when we know God is with us. God is with us when we feel scared. God is with us when we have to do something big and important.

Touch each child's hand with some olive oil and say, "God is with you."



Saul becomes king

1 Samuel 8:1-10:25

supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- Crayons
- Bowl with small amount of olive oil

storytelling props

- Story folder (from Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet)
- Saul story puppet (from Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet)
- Samuel and Crowd story puppets (from Additional resources)

resource pack

- Story picture
- Bible backdrop (optional)

to do

- Prepare a Story folder and Saul story puppet from a bonus leaflet.
- Prepare the Samuel and Crowd story puppets from page 91 in this guide.
- Practice telling the story while moving three puppets.
- Prepare the Early Childhood leaflets by following the instructions on page 3 so that they are ready for use after the Bible story.
- Pour a small amount of olive oil in a bowl.

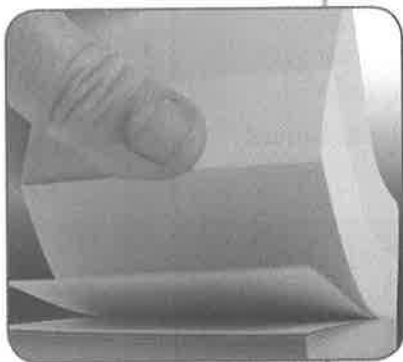
explore

CREATE

Give each child three paper donkeys from page 91 in this guide. Have children glue the donkeys on construction paper. Then provide sticky notes or squares of paper and tape. Children can cover some or all of the construction paper with sticky notes. (If using squares of paper, tape them only on one edge so they can be lifted.) Have children exchange their finished projects with a friend. Children can look under the sticky notes or papers to find the three “lost” donkeys.

supplies

- Three donkeys per child (from Additional resources)
- Construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Sticky notes
- Paper squares and tape (optional)



MOVE

Searching was an important element in the story. Saul was searching for his father’s lost donkeys. Saul hid in fear, which left the people searching for their missing king. Choose one of the following seek-and-find activities that works for your space: (a) Have one child (Saul) hide while the rest of the group looks for the child. (b) Set out a large variety of bags, purses, backpacks, or grocery bags. Hide the Saul story puppet from the Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet under one of the bags for children to find. (c) Hide the three donkeys from page 91 in this guide in three places in the room for children to find.

supplies

- Saul story puppet (from Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet)
- Donkeys (from Additional resources)
- Variety of bags

RETELL

Play a memory game using the Bible backdrop and Saul-related Matching cards (Saul, Samuel anointing Saul, donkey, and crown) from the resource pack. Game instructions are on page 88 in this guide.

supplies

- Bible backdrop (from resource pack)
- Matching cards (from resource pack)

DISCOVER

The oil that Samuel used to anoint Saul was probably made from olives. Tape a piece of wax paper to the table in front of each child. Sprinkle several drops of oil on the wax paper. Have children smell and touch the oil. Create designs by wiping a finger through the oil.

supplies

- Wax paper
- Tape
- Olive oil or other vegetable oil
- Paper towels for cleanup

other ideas

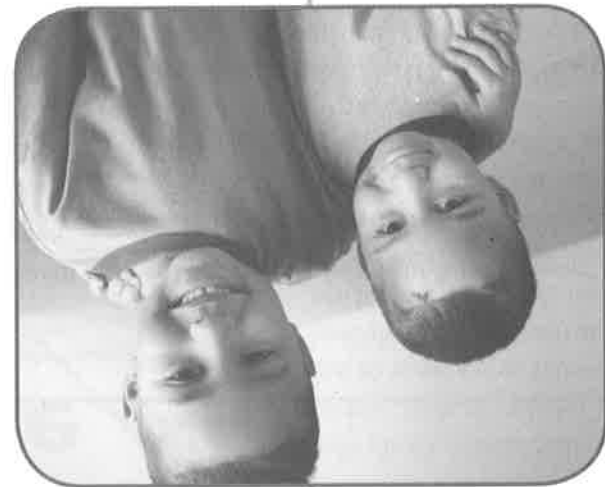
- Visit www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras for a free coloring sheet of Saul. “Anoint” the picture with a bit of oil.
- Retell the story using materials from the Bonus Early Childhood Leaflet, as well as figures from page 91 in this guide.

PRAY

Gather the group in a circle. Sing the first verse of "Prayer of Peace" from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 22. Lyrics are at the back of this guide.

SEND

Use these words from Isaiah 43:1b as a blessing:
God says, "I have called you by name, you are mine."
Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.



Sometimes we try to do so much and impact everyone, but a moment need not be monumental. It need only help an individual, a single person, and that can mean the world.
—Chris Bache
La Canada, California

leader's closing prayer

You never know what a day will hold. Saul started out looking for lost donkeys and ended up being crowned king of Israel. Sometimes the mundane tasks of life lead us to unique opportunities to serve God.
God, you invite me to be part of your work in the world. Help me to be open to your Spirit. Amen.

- supplies**
- Early Childhood leaflets
 - *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
 - CD player