

Choosing a King

(1 Samuel 8 – 10:24)

Introduction

[Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about making choices, by asking some variation of the following questions:]

1. What are some easy choices you make every day? (What to wear to school, what to eat for breakfast, etc.)
2. What are some choices that might be harder to make? (Whether or not to be kind to a kid that others are mean to, whether to forgive someone who doesn't deserve it. etc.)
3. What can you do to show me that you have made a decision to serve and obey God? (To not lie or cheat, to read my Bible, etc.)

Every day we have to make choices. Today we will talk about the importance of making good choices.

Opening Prayer

Father, we love You and we want to please You. Every day we have many choices to make: what to wear, what to eat, where to go, who to play with, whether we'll be obedient to our parents... We want to learn how to make godly choices so that everything we think, or say, or do brings Your name honor. We don't want to do anything that displeases You. Help us to pay attention this morning so that we will learn the importance of making good choices. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15 NKJ)

Lesson

What would you say if someone very important said you were going to be a king or queen? In our Bible story today, we'll hear about someone who was told he would be king.

Samuel had been serving the Lord since he was three years old. At the time we pick up the story in 1 Samuel 8, Samuel is an old man. He had been Israel's judge for many years. He spent his life traveling around the towns and cities, visiting the people and teaching them God's way.

1 Samuel 8:1

As Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel.

Samuel was the last judge over Israel. And, since he was getting on in years, he decided to have his sons take over for him.

1 Samuel 8:3

But they were not like their father, for they were greedy for money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice.

Samuel had grown up serving and obeying God with his whole life, but he was unable to lead his sons into a close relationship with God. They were greedy and dishonest. We don't know why Samuel's sons turned out to be so bad. But the lesson for us is this: someday you will stand before God and give an account of your life, both the good and the bad. You won't be able to rely on your parent's good name. You must choose to follow God for yourself.

Even though Samuel was a good and godly man, his sons were evil.

1 Samuel 8:4-5

Finally, all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. "Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have."

The children of Israel wanted to be just like all the other nations around them who had kings. The problem was they were God's chosen people. He didn't want them to be like other nations; He wanted them to set the example for them.

God wants you to be set apart from others, too. Is it easy for other kids to talk you into doing things that displease God? Or, do you stand firm on your faith in God? God wanted the children of Israel to show people that they trusted and obeyed God.

1 Samuel 8:6

Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the LORD for guidance.

Samuel was very upset. He knew that the Lord was disappointed when the children of Israel asked for a King. Hadn't God proved Himself over and over to be a good and loving? Hadn't He led them out of Egypt and performed all kinds of miraculous deeds on their behalf? Wasn't He the King of kings and the Lord of Lords?

Samuel was displeased with the people so he prayed to the Lord. And that's what you and I need to do, too. Whenever you get upset about something, go to the Lord, and pour out your feelings to Him. The Lord will answer you, just as He did Samuel.

1 Samuel 8:7

"Do everything they say to you," the LORD replied, "for they are rejecting me, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer.

God told Samuel to let them have a king. But before he did that, Samuel wanted to tell the people some of the things that would happen to them when they had a human king ruling over them.

1 Samuel 8:11

"This is how a king will reign over you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers, making them run before his chariots.

Samuel told them that if they appointed a man to be king over them, he will tax them, use the money to keep a trained army and make their sons serve as soldiers. Then he will build himself a fancy house and take their sons and daughters for his slaves.

Samuel carefully explained that it was going to be very hard on them to have a man rule over them as a king. But the people refused to listen.

1 Samuel 8:19-20

But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said. "We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle."

Have you ever made a wrong choice because you wanted to be like everyone else? Never let others pull you away from what God says is right. Because the children of Israel wanted to be like the unbelieving nations around them, they were heading for spiritual disaster.

One day a man named Saul, was out looking for his father's donkeys. He and his servant walked many miles searching for them. Finally Saul suggested that they just return home without the donkeys. But Saul's servant suddenly remembered something.

1 Samuel 9:6

But the servant said, "I've just thought of something! There is a man of God who lives here in this town. He is held in high honor by all the people because everything he says comes true. Let's go find him. Perhaps he can tell us which way to go."

The servant remembered that Samuel was a prophet and lived nearby. He thought that perhaps Samuel could tell them where the donkeys went.

1 Samuel 9:10

"All right," Saul agreed, "let's try it!" So they started into the town where the man of God lived.

They went to the town where Samuel lived and just as they entered the gate, they saw him.

Meanwhile, God had already spoken to Samuel and told him that Saul would be coming and that he was to anoint him as the king over the people.

You see, God is sovereign. That means He knows all things and He has our lives all mapped out before we are even born. And He has all power! He makes all things happen according to His will and for His purposes. God is in control of every circumstance in our life and we can trust Him to lead us and to take care of all our needs. We serve a great and awesome God, don't we? God told Samuel ahead of time that Saul was the one to appoint king over Israel.

1 Samuel 9:17

When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said, "That's the man I told you about! He will rule my people."

Samuel took Saul and his servant into a great dining hall, where there were thirty other guests. Much to Saul's surprise, he was given the place of honor at the table and a special portion of food.

The next day when Saul and his servant were leaving to go back home, Samuel wanted to talk to Saul privately.

1 Samuel 9:27

When they reached the edge of town, Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead. After the servant was gone, Samuel said, "Stay here, for I have received a special message for you from God."

Then Samuel told Saul that God had chosen him to be the king over all Israel. Many days later, Samuel called all the people together to make the announcement.

1 Samuel 10:17-19

Later Samuel called all the people of Israel to meet before the LORD at Mizpah. And he said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has

declared: I brought you from Egypt and rescued you from the Egyptians and from all of the nations that were oppressing you. But though I have rescued you from your misery and distress, you have rejected your God today and have said, 'No, we want a king instead!' Now, therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by tribes and clans."

Samuel reminded the people all that God had done for Israel since He brought them out of Egypt. He said that God was not pleased that they did not trust Him to look after them. God didn't want to give them a king because *He* was their king. Yet, they were not satisfied with God! He was not enough. They wanted to be like the rest of the world. Since they wanted a king, God would show them who that was to be. Samuel announced that Saul was to be their king.

1 Samuel 10:24

Then Samuel said to all the people, "This is the man the LORD has chosen as your king. No one in all Israel is like him!" And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

It wasn't God's perfect will for the people to have a human king to rule over them. He wanted the people to look to Him for all their needs. What a sad thing for God's people to be dissatisfied with God! They thought God wasn't enough; they wanted to be like the people in the nations around them! You and I need to be careful to not want the things of this world.

Do you ever see things on TV that you want? Sometimes we want things just because we see it on TV or because our friends have it. When we desire to have things just because our friends or neighbors have them, watch out! Not everything is good for us. Be careful not to want the things of this world more than you do the things of God. We need to make wise choices, don't we? We need to choose things that will please God.

The Israelites were happy to have Saul as their king. But as we will learn in the weeks to come, their decision to have a king brought the people a lot of trouble. The trouble all started because they wanted to be like all the other countries around them.

It is very important for you to make good choices in life. The very most important choice you can make is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to want to please Him with everything you do in life.

Closing Prayer

Father, forgive us for looking at the things of the world and wanting those things more than we want You. Teach us how to make good choices in life so that we always follow You. Help us to make a choice today to serve You all the days of our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Draw pictures of ways you can serve and obey the God. [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion of what they can draw. Here are some suggestions: Praying hands to show that you can pray; bible to show that you can read Bible God's Word; friends to show that you can be kind to your friends.]

Game Center

Memory Verse Activity

Preparation:

Write each word of today's Memory Verse on separate sheets of construction paper. Tape sheets in verse order in a path on the floor.

Procedure:

Lead children to find Joshua 24:15 in their Bibles and repeat the verse aloud. Have each child take a turn following the path in a different way (step, hop, jump, etc.) as other children say the words aloud together. Invite children to mix up the words on the path and then attempt to

step on words in verse order. [Teacher, you can number the papers in verse order to assist nonreaders.]

Discussion:

Today we talked about choosing to serve and follow God. Each of us gets to make this important choice. [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about the importance of making godly choices.]

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. What were Samuel's sons like? (They were greedy and dishonest.)
2. Why did the people of Israel want a king? (They wanted to be just like all the other nations around them who had kings.)
3. Why was God displeased with the people's desire to have a king? (He wanted them to look to Him as their King. And, by doing so, set the example to all the nations around them. He wanted the children of Israel to show people that they trusted and obeyed God.)
4. What did Samuel do when he was displeased with the people? (He prayed to the Lord.)
5. What did Samuel explain that it was going to be like for the people to have a king? (It would be hard on the people: he would charge taxes, want an army, a big house, and servants...)
6. Have you ever made a wrong choice because you wanted to be like someone else?
7. Why did Saul and his servant go to Samuel? (Saul was out looking for his father's donkeys and thought that Samuel might know where they were.)

8. When Saul found Samuel, he and his servant were invited to a great dinner where there were thirty other guests. What surprising thing happened at that dinner party? (Saul was treated as the guest of honor and given a special portion of food.)
9. What are some easy choices children your age make every day? (What to wear to school, what to eat for breakfast, etc.)
10. What are some choices that might be harder to make? (Whether or not to be kind to a kid that others are mean to, whether or not to lie about homework not being finished, etc.)
11. What is a choice you can make this week to show that you want to serve and obey God? (Answers will vary.)
12. By demanding a king, what did the people show God? (They were dissatisfied with God.)

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