



Samuel

MEETING AIM

To understand that God wants the best for us, but we don't always want what he wants.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 8

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used at home or online by video-call. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

God wanted his people to trust him as their leader and king. Samuel knew this. But God's people demanded that God gave them a king. God allowed them to have a king, knowing they would have to learn the hard way. Note: Samuel heard God's voice and obeyed him.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask them to think about the things they could not do during the pandemic restrictions. The rules were for our good, but they were not what we wanted. Imagine a few scenarios – a child wants to visit a grandparent, but it is not allowed; a child wants to go on the bus, but it is not encouraged; a child wants to go to school or nursery, but it is closed. How do children feel about this?

PLAY

10 MINS

Play 'Old Man Samuel says' (a version of 'Simon says'). Stand so everyone can see each other. Demonstrate a variety of actions such as clap hands, stamp feet, turn around, touch toes, beginning each command by saying: "Old Man Samuel says: 'Clap your hands!'" or simply: "Clap your hands!" Any child obeying an instruction without Old Man Samuel saying so sits down for the next two instructions.

Talk about what it means to follow instructions and to be led by someone.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

Make sure the children can all see you and tell this story:

God's people didn't have a king. Instead, they were led by men and one woman called judges or leaders, who told them

what God was saying, sorted out their quarrels and told them what to do. Samuel was the last of the judges.

He had become an old, old man. Who would take over when he died? The people wanted a king just like everyone else. A proper king!

The children stand to practise saying: "We want a king!" and stamping a foot. After each of the following statements, they act out the body movement and say: "We want a king!" starting quietly but getting louder as the story is told. The storyteller remains sitting.

Old Man Samuel was getting old. The people frowned. They were worried about who would lead them now. They said...

Old Man Samuel had two sons who might have taken over from Samuel. But they did not love God. In fact, they did bad things. The people shook their heads and said...

Old Man Samuel told them God did not want them to have a king. The people scowled and said...

The people could see that other countries had a king. They wanted to be like them. Old Man Samuel told them that these kings did bad things. The people shook their heads and said...

Old Man Samuel told them a king would make the dads and big brothers fight in his army. The people shrugged their shoulders and said...

Old Man Samuel told them a king would make people work very, very hard on his farms. The people laughed and said...

Old Man Samuel told them a king would take their land and add it to his own land. He would put the things that belonged to them into his palace. The people stamped their feet and said...

Old Man Samuel told them a king would steal their sheep and goats. The people waved their fists and said...

Old Man Samuel talked to God about this. What should he say and do? God told Samuel to tell the people they could have a king, even though this was not the best for them. God would help Samuel find the best man to be their king. The people jumped up and down and clapped their hands and said...

(If parents and carers are present, remind them that so often we disobey God and end up learning things the hard way.)

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Imagine you are Samuel. You know God wants the people to trust him as their leader, their king. This is the very best for them. But they want to be like everyone else and have their own king. How would you feel if you were Samuel – the people want one thing, God wants another?
- Jesus showed us how to live in a way that pleases God and makes life better for everyone. What things does Jesus want us to do? It can be difficult to be like Jesus. What happens if we don't want to be kind, helpful, gentle or sharing?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: scissors; A4 paper; pens; sticky tape

Prepare this beforehand unless children can cut for themselves. Fold the paper in half lengthways. Cut a line of shallow zigzags to create the 'top' of a crown. Cut along the fold and stick two sides together. Before joining up the other sides to complete the circle of the crown, encourage the children to write or draw all the things a good leader or king would be and do.

Alternatively, do this as a group activity making a giant crown, and colouring it in or adding stickers.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: crowns from 'Creative time'

Ask the children to stand up and put their crown on their heads. They say after each of the following sentences: "Lord God, I want you to be my leader!"

When I don't want to be kind, help me, God, to be kind. Lord God, I want you to be my leader!

When I want to tell a lie, help me, God, to tell the truth. Lord God, I want you to be my leader!

When I don't want to share my favourite game, help me, God, to share. Lord God, I want you to be my leader!

When I get cross or rude, help me, God, to think of others. Lord God, I want you to be my leader!

Thank you, God, that you want the very best for me. Amen.

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Saul

MEETING AIM

Sometimes we discover we have got to do something difficult. God promises to help us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 9-10

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

King Saul showed so much potential when he was chosen as king of Israel. God made it clear to Samuel that Saul was God's choice. Being any kind of leader has its challenges, but Saul chose to disobey God. His anger and jealousy of David brought about his destruction. God promises to help all those who put their trust in him.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Ask them what they remember from the last session about Samuel, when God agreed to give his people a king, even though this was not the best for them. If they were going to choose a king, what would be the most important thing to look for?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: a wool 'donkey's tail'

Talk about what children know about donkeys – the noise they make, what they do, what it is like to ride on a donkey. Today's Bible story is about a man who lost a herd of donkeys.

Play 'Lost donkey'. Send one child out of the room, hide the donkey's tail, then guide the child to find the tail by singing, quietly the further they are from the tail, louder as they get closer. If you're working online, ask one child to close their eyes, while you hide the tail somewhere in your background.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

Ask everyone to sit down. As you tell the story, every time you say: "Old Man Samuel" the children hunch their shoulders or stroke a beard. They stretch up tall

when you say: "Tall Man Saul".

Tall Man Saul was the tallest man in the land. He was also the most handsome man in the land. His dad was a farmer and owned lots of donkeys. Tall Man Saul's job was to look after them. *Show the donkey tail from the game, if you played it.*

One day all the donkeys ran away. Tall Man Saul had lost them. He went with his servant to look for them. *Talk about how the children would feel if they had lost all these donkeys.*

He went to all the farms in the village. No donkeys.

He went to the next-door town. No donkeys.

He climbed the hills at the back of his village and the next hill and the next hill. No donkeys.

Then his servant had a bright idea. He said: "Near here lives a man of God, the judge called Old Man Samuel. Everything he says comes true. Let's ask him where the donkeys have gone." Tall Man Saul thought this was a good idea.

It was difficult for Old Man Samuel to know who would make a good king for God's people. On this particular day God said to him: "Go through the main gate of the town. There you will meet the man who's going to be king."

Old Man Samuel walked through the gate. Coming up the hill towards the town gate was the tallest man he had ever seen. God said: "There's your king."

Tall Man Saul came up the hill and met Old Man Samuel, who said to him: "Your donkeys have all gone home. It's OK. Now come to my house for a special meal. You are my special guest."

Tall Man Saul was puzzled. How did this old man know about the donkeys? And why was he inviting him for a special meal? *Talk about what food they might have eaten at this special feast.*

A few hours later, Old Man Samuel told Tall Man Saul that God had chosen him to be king of God's people. Old Man Samuel put oil on Tall Man Saul's head. It was a sign that God had chosen him. The people now had their king. It was difficult for Old Man Samuel to find the right man to be king. But God helped him.

When King Saul got home, all the donkeys had returned. Samuel had told the truth. It would be difficult for Saul to be king. But from the start God was with Saul in a special way.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- How do you think Old Man Samuel felt after God showed him the right man to be king?
- How would Tall Man Saul feel after Old Man Samuel told him God had chosen him to be king?
- What difficult things do you have to do?

CREATIVE TIME & PRAYER

15 MINS

You will need: enough playdough for each child to have a small lump

Give out the playdough. If you're working online, make sure everyone has some. Ask each child to make a donkey shape out of playdough. Tall Man Saul found it difficult to look after donkeys.

Ask them to make a crown shape. Tall Man Saul was going to be king. This was a difficult thing for him to be and do.

Ask them to make the face of their headteacher at school or nursery. You could ask for their names before praying for them. They have a difficult job.

Ask them to make the face of a person who looks after them. Pray for them in their difficult task.

Ask them to make the shape of something they do that is difficult – spelling, eating food they don't like, someone at school who is difficult to like.

Invite each child to talk with God in their heads about this, asking him to help them. Thank God that he helps and guides us.

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Jonathan

MEETING AIM

To hear how Jonathan helped David escape from King Saul, reflecting on friendships.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 20

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

David had become great friends with King Saul's son, Jonathan. Jonathan would never become king. King Saul saw David as a threat and hated him. When David told Jonathan about this, Jonathan could not believe it. David wanted to escape from Saul's royal court. He and Jonathan came up with a plan to test just how angry Saul was with David. It tested their friendship.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Talk about the children's friends. How do they know each other? What do they do together? What do they like about their friends? Work out together what makes a good friend. Be sensitive to the fact that some children find it easier to make friends than others.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: children's bricks such as Lego or Duplo

Give the children five minutes to construct a stable tower, not necessarily tall, but strong. If you're meeting in person, the children can work in teams. They take it in turns to put a brick in place. Talk about what it was like to work together, easy or difficult. Did it help if they knew the others in their group? Was it hard to wait for their turn? If children were working alone, was it easy to work on their own?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: play people such as Duplo, Lego or Playmobil (one each for Saul, David, Jonathan and a servant boy); three chairs from the same play-set as the people; an object to represent a rock; three used matchsticks to represent arrows; a plain cloth

As you tell this story, place the figures on a cloth, moving them around as appropriate:

Here is King Saul. He's been king of God's people for years. But he has stopped ruling God's people properly. He no longer listens to God. *Place him on the cloth.*

Here is Prince Jonathan. He is the son of King Saul. *Place him on the cloth.*

Here is David. He's been chosen by God to become king after King Saul (not Prince Jonathan). King Saul really dislikes David. He wants to get rid of him. David is scared. *Place him on the cloth, away from Saul.*

Prince Jonathan and David have become best friends. *Place Jonathan and David next to each other.*

One day, David tells Prince Jonathan that he is going to run away. He is afraid of what King Saul will do to him. Prince Jonathan is shocked. He can't believe his dad wants to get rid of David. So, he comes up with a cunning plan to find out what King Saul really thinks of David. This is what happened.

There was a party in King Saul's palace which lasted several days. The first day, King Saul had a great feast. Prince Jonathan sat opposite his dad. There was an empty chair for David. *Seat Jonathan opposite King Saul, with an empty one for David.*

King Saul wondered where David was. But he didn't say anything.

The next day King Saul had another great feast. Prince Jonathan sat opposite his dad. There was an empty chair for David. *Point at the still empty chair.*

This time, King Saul spoke to Prince Jonathan: "Where is that friend of yours, David? He should be here."

Prince Jonathan said: "He's had to go home to see his family."

At this King Saul stood up and got very angry with Prince Jonathan. "How dare you tell me this?! David is a bad man. I want to get rid of him!" He was so angry with Prince Jonathan. Then Prince Jonathan knew his dad hated David.

Prince Jonathan ran out into the fields where he knew David was hiding. He took with him a young boy, three arrows and a bow. *Place David behind a rock; stand the servant figure next to Jonathan.*

Prince Jonathan shot his three arrows to the side of the rock. Then he sent the young boy to find the arrows. *Place the matches to the side of the rock. Run the servant towards the rock and move the matches and figures as needed.*

As the young boy got close to the rock, Prince Jonathan shouted out: "Go beyond the rock. I have shot the arrows a long way away. Run fast to get them." (This was a sign to David that he should run a long way away.) The boy ran beyond the rock, doing what Jonathan had said.

At last, the boy found the arrows and brought them to Prince Jonathan. He returned to the king, but Prince Jonathan stayed to find his best friend, David. They hugged each other and cried because they were so sad. They promised to remain friends. They asked God to keep them safe. Then David ran away.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Some children may be puzzled by the story. Ask questions to check they have understood. They may ask questions. Go on to chat about these questions:

- How would you feel if you were Jonathan and realised your dad disliked your best friend?
- Jonathan might have wanted to be king after his father. This might have made him jealous and dislike David. How did Jonathan show he was a good friend to David?
- Have you ever been sad to say goodbye to someone you love? Imagine how David and Jonathan felt!

**CREATIVE TIME**

10 MINS

You will need: paper; crayons or felt-tip pens; instructions for making paper planes

Make paper planes. As you do so, make the connection with the three arrows that Jonathan shot. Make sure they have made their plane distinctive either by using different coloured paper or by decorating their plane. The children can have fun testing how good their plane is at flying..

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: paper planes from 'Creative time'

Explain that when we send a short prayer or message to God, it is as though we are sending an arrow towards him, knowing he hears us. It's called an arrow prayer.

David and Prince Jonathan were good friends. The first prayer today is to thank God for our friends. Each child repeats the following: "Thank you God for [their friend's name]!" Each child shoots their arrow (plane) in the air, then runs to fetch it.

David and Jonathan were sad to say goodbye to one another. The second prayer is to pray for anyone who is sad. Ask if any child knows someone who is sad. Each child repeats the following: "Please, God, be with any boys or girls who are sad today!" They shoot their arrows, as above.

David and Jonathan asked God to keep them safe. The third prayer is to ask God to keep us safe this week. Each child repeats the following: "Please, God, keep me safe from all danger this week. Amen." They shoot arrows, as above.



David

MEETING AIM

To hear the story of David and Goliath and to reflect on David's courage and trust in God. We can know that God is with us when we are afraid.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 17:20-51

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

Children are afraid of all sorts of things, rational and irrational, acknowledged and secret. This session requires great sensitivity. There is nothing wrong with being afraid. Allow children to share their fears without putting them under any pressure. Learning to trust an all-powerful God is important for children to grasp in our scary world.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Tell them about a time when, as a child, you were afraid. Do this in such a way that they are reassured by your experience and not frightened.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper (optional)

Children draw or act out something that makes them scared. The other children should guess what it is.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a crown for a small child's head; a 'throne'; a small cardboard shield; a small plastic knife; a large elastic band; volunteers (children or leaders) willing and confident to act out the story

If possible, tell this story outside with space to create a battlefield and somewhere to run. Introduce the main characters:

The second tallest volunteer is King Saul, the tallest man in the land.

The tallest child is young David, small

and not yet grown up.

The shortest child is Goliath, the giant. The children may be puzzled by this. Point out the lack of logic!

The rest are Philistine soldiers or King Saul's soldiers.

Split the group in two, facing each other in two lines three metres apart. Saul and David are at one end, Saul sits on his throne, a crown on his head. Small Goliath stands at the other end, shield and plastic knife in hand.

King Saul started off well as a good king. *God's people cheer, Saul looks proud.* Everyone was so glad to have a king, just like other countries. He was tall, handsome and good at fighting his enemies. But things began to go wrong. He became proud. He didn't listen to his advisors and friends. He stopped listening to God and to Samuel, the man of God.

God's people were fighting a battle against their enemies, the Philistines. *Loud cheers from Philistines.*

God's people were scared of the fierce Philistines. *Feeble cries from God's people.*

The Philistines' secret weapon was a huge, fierce giant. Goliath walked up and down the battle lines between the Philistines and God's people, shouting and waving his fists. He shouted out that he wanted to fight any soldier from God's people. Goliath struts up and down looking fierce. *Philistines cheer, God's people cry feebly.*

No one wanted to fight him. God's people were all too scared. When they looked at Goliath, they saw a huge, tall fighter!

David was a young boy. He had seven big brothers and probably many sisters. His brothers were on the side of God's people. *Randomly choose a few children from God's people to be David's brothers.* David stayed at home to look after his dad's sheep. Sometimes he protected his sheep using a sling, like an elastic band. He fired a stone with his sling which struck a fierce lion or bear – and killed it.

One day his dad, worried about his sons, sent David to take food and drink to his brothers on the battlefield. *David gives gifts to his brothers who stand up.* David was surprised to see two armies lined up facing each other. He was even more surprised to hear how scared God's people were. Surely, God would help his people to fight bravely and boldly. *David walks up*

and down between the two lines, flexing his elastic band.

"I'll fight Goliath, the giant!" David said. All the soldiers of God's people laughed and laughed. *They laugh appropriately.* All the soldiers of the Philistines laughed even more. *They guffaw!* When they looked at David, all they could see was a short, young man.

King Saul thought David was too small to fight. He gave David a sword and a shield to fight with. But David refused. This is what he said to King David.

"I have fought a lion and a bear. God has kept me safe. He will keep me safe now. I'm going to fight in the name of the Lord God All-Powerful." Everyone looked at David and saw only a short, young man. But with God on his side, he was the most powerful, the tallest and strongest person on the battlefield. Goliath was the smallest and the weakest.

David and Goliath face each other, either end of the two lines. The two armies shout for David or Goliath. (Give them the sign for when to be quiet.)

David and Goliath slowly walked towards each other – tall David and short Goliath. "I come in the name of the Lord God All-Powerful!" shouted David. He put a small stone into his elastic band and with a flick, fired it towards Goliath. It hit Goliath on the forehead. He dropped down, dead! *Children act this out.*

The soldiers of God's people cheered and cheered. The Philistine soldiers got up and ran away. *Before telling this story think where the Philistines are going to run.*

**CHATTING TOGETHER**

5 MINS

Chat about these questions:

- Who were the scared people in this story? What made them scared?
- What did they do about their fear? Who did they tell about their fear?
- I wonder how David felt at the start of this story, the middle and at the end! What made him brave enough to fight?
- Is it a bad thing to be afraid of something? Think back to the scary things you talked about at the start. Who can you tell when you are afraid?
- How can telling God about our fears make a difference?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: a paper or card shield, as large as possible, on which are the words 'The Lord God All-Powerful'

Children draw themselves on this giant shield, maybe drawing a picture of themselves as they imagined themselves in 'Play'. If you are working online, get children to draw themselves on a piece of paper.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Everyone stands up, screwing up their eyes tightly as though they are frightened. Ask each child to think of one thing that scares them. The Lord God All-Powerful was on David's side. Can they picture God on their side, coming to take away their fear?

Children open their eyes and say: "The Lord God All-Powerful is on our side!" Start quietly and say it three times, getting louder.

You could sing or listen to a song about God giving us courage such as 'God is bigger' by Awesome Cutlery.