



Samuel

MEETING AIM

To wonder why we might choose to follow other people, rather than God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 8

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.

Samuel had served God since childhood, but now in his old age, the faithfulness of the people – and his own sons – seem to be slipping away. It is the dishonest actions of his sons that lead the elders of the people to demand a king. They looked at the nations around them and wanted what they had. Even though Samuel warns them of what this will mean – they basically will lose their current freedoms – the people still want a king. Both Samuel and God are rejected.

Those in our groups might sit on either side of this argument. They may feel rejected – cut off from friendship groups or be mourning relationships lost during lockdown. Or they may be looking at lives of others and thinking the grass is greener. Be sensitive to children with both these outlooks as you explore this story.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Chat about what the children have done this week.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: pictures of people in positions of leadership – politicians, royalty, celebrities, teachers, fictional characters (such as the Avengers); pens and paper
Print out the pictures and show them to your children or share your screen so that everyone can see. Decide together whether these are good leaders or not. What makes someone a good leader? Once you have looked at all the pictures, create a blueprint for a good leader. You could make a list of attributes together, or ask the children to draw a good leader, and then share what they have come up with.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; list or pictures from 'Play'; pens and paper

Before you start reading the Bible, give a bit of background about Samuel. He was dedicated to God when he was just a baby, and he grew up in the place where the people of God worshipped him. He became the leader of God's people, and God helped him as he led. But now Samuel is old...

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-3 and measure Joel and Abijah against your list or pictures of what a good leader is. How do they measure up? What do the children think life was like, living with these two as leaders? How might Samuel have felt?

Read 1 Samuel 8:4-9 and ask the children if they would have done what the elders of Israel did. Then read verses 10-18 and ask the children to write down what the king would do to the people, or draw what kind of a person Samuel says a king would be. Compare the words and pictures and ask who might be the worst of the two options to be in charge: a king or Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah.

Finish the chapter and ask the children to think about why the people wanted to be like other countries and have a king.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Continue exploring the story by asking the children these questions:

- What does this story tell you about God?
- What does this story tell you about people?
- God said that by asking for a king, the people were rejecting him. Why might the people have rejected God? Why did they want to be like everyone else?
- Does any of this story remind you of anything from your life or community?
- Have you ever felt rejected?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: art materials; paper

Provide a range of art materials for the children to choose from – whatever you have available. If you're working online, then make sure children have access to at least felt-tip pens or crayons and some paper.

Encourage the children to create a picture or write something in response to what they have discovered through the Bible story. Give them the opportunity to create what they would like to. You can use this opportunity to carry on your chat about the story. When hands are busy, this is often the ideal time for children's minds to start processing what they have discovered, and also make a connection with God. Indeed, the end result is not the most important thing, so it doesn't matter if everyone has finished their artwork or not. The most important thing is to provide a time and space when a child can meet with God and reflect with him about what he's saying to them.

If children would like to show and explain what they have done, then let them, but don't force anyone to share who doesn't want to.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Finish by giving children the chance to chat with God about what he has been saying to them. Read these prayer prompts, leaving 20 seconds or so in between each one to let the children respond quietly or finish the sentence in their heads.

I'm sorry, God, when I have looked at what other people are doing and wanted to follow them.

I'm sorry, God, when I have not chosen the best path to follow.

Thank you that you are always there for me, especially when...

Walk with me this week and be with me when I have to make difficult choices. Help me to follow you when I have to...

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



Saul

MEETING AIM

To discover that God chooses the ones he wants to choose, no matter how difficult they are to find.

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.

In session 1, we discovered that the people of God asked Samuel for a king and that God agreed. Now we see the process begin of finding that king. God guides Samuel to Saul, in what seems like a very unlikely combination of events. Lost donkeys lead Saul to Samuel; God tells Samuel that Saul is the one; Samuel anoints Saul; Samuel tells Saul what will happen next (including goats, bread and musical prophets); Samuel summons the nation to Mizpah and chooses Saul to be king; Saul hides among the baggage before being proclaimed king by the people.

It's a long, improbable story, but is worth dwelling in with children. They will discover much about God, about Saul and about themselves.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

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INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

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- I'm sorry, God, when I have not chosen the best path to follow.
- Thank you that you are always there for me, especially when...
- Walk with me this week and be with me when I have to make difficult choices. Help me to follow you when I have to...

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for Premier Youth and Children's Work.



Jonathan

MEETING AIM

To learn about best friends, David and Jonathan.

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 has been chosen by God to be the next king of Israel, because the current king, Saul, has disobeyed God. David is young, handsome and brave, he's also a battle-winning hero who is cheered by the people for killing more enemies than King Saul. The jealous king wants David dead, but the king's son, Jonathan, loves David "as he loved himself" (verse 17). Jonathan might have expected to be king after his father, but instead he works with God's chosen king..

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Chat about what the children have done this week.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: paper; sticky tape or masking tape; instructions for making paper spears (visit: <https://bit.ly/3tSi8hX>)

Explain that today's story involves lots of fighting, and that in Old Testament times most soldiers fought with spears. Make one paper spear each and practise throwing it safely.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: paper spears from 'Intro activity'

Explain that everyone needs to be ready to run in this story – there is danger all around! All practise running on the spot (make sure you have an alternative for children who struggle with movement).

Teach the other actions: hide = hide behind something; promise = shake hands with yourself; kill = throw spears (if you're meeting person, the children will have to retrieve their spear after everyone has thrown them). Begin the story:

There are three people in this story: King Saul, his son Jonathan and David the king-in-waiting, who has been chosen by God. All three are good at fighting Israel's enemies, who are everywhere! KILL them! *Everyone throws spears.*

As soon as David met Jonathan, they said they'd be best friends for ever – that's a PROMISE! *Shake hands.*

David was brilliant at winning battles, much better than King Saul. When Saul heard the crowds cheering David, he was madly jealous. He tried to KILL David! *Everyone throws spears.*

David saw the king's spear whizz past his head and thought: RUN! *Everyone jogs on the spot.* David ran home, but the king sent soldiers after him: RUN! *Continue running.* David ran to the desert but the king followed him: RUN! *Continue running.* David had to talk to his friend Jonathan, so he raced back into town: RUN! *Jog on the spot then stop to get your breath back!*

David said to his best friend: "Your dad's trying to kill me – I PROMISE!" *Shake hands.*

Jonathan said: "I'll go and find out what mood he's in, I PROMISE! Shake hands. If he's still angry, I'll warn you – in God's name, I PROMISE!" *Shake hands.*

Jonathan swore he would always be on David's side – PROMISE! *Shake hands.* David swore he would always love his best friend, Jonathan – PROMISE! *Shake hands.*

Then Jonathan told David his plan: "Stay here and HIDE!" *Everyone hides.* They planned a secret signal with a bow and arrow, and Jonathan went back to have dinner with King Saul.

"Where's David?" said the king, when he saw the empty place at the table.

"Er..." said Jonathan. "He had to go and see his family in Bethlehem."

"WHAAAT?" yelled Saul. "Liar! You're as bad as he is! And you're on his side! He's going to die! And I'll KILL you!" *Everyone throws spears.*

Jonathan was angry and sad, but he hurried to warn David – RUN! *Everyone jogs on the spot.* He shot an arrow past David's hiding place: this was the secret signal that David's life was in danger and he needed to escape.

David and Jonathan hugged each other and cried, because they had to say goodbye. David cried hardest, and Jonathan said: "As God is our witness, we and our families will be best friends for ever. I PROMISE!" *Shake hands.*

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Discuss the story using these questions:

What do you notice about this story?

- Which part of the story did you like best?
- How did it feel to act like David?
- What questions would you like to ask King Saul or Jonathan?
- What do you think God was doing in this story?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: embroidery thread in a variety of colours; scissors; instructions for making friendship bracelets (try: <https://bit.ly/3sYjicA>)

Show children how to start off their friendship bracelets. Once everyone has settled into the rhythm of knotting threads, chat about the friendship of David and Jonathan and wonder about all those promises they made to each other. Wonder why these bracelets are called friendship bracelets. What does David and Jonathan's friendship tell us about God? Share the good things we learn about God through our friends.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: paper spears from 'Intro activity'

Explain that, when we get things wrong, which we all do because we're only human, the Bible calls this 'sin'. The word literally means 'missing the mark', as if we've tried to hit a target and missed it. So today you're going to say sorry to God for when you have missed the target of being good friends. Ask the children to think about the times when they have been unkind or when they have let their friends down, while they try to hit this target with the spears.

Take it in turns to throw a spear. Then say:

Father, we are sorry for those times when our friendships have missed the mark. Help us to be good friends. Amen.

CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh:
www.clairebentonevans.com.



David

MEETING AIM

To remember what God has done for us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 17

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.

Saul is king of the Israelites and they are at war with the Philistines. The Philistines were a great threat, with their champion fighter, Goliath, and it seemed impossible to defeat them, with no equal champion to fight back. David remembered that they didn't need to worry about their size if God was on their side, though. What has God done in your life to make you confident of God's protection, help and love in the present and the future? What about in the children's lives? The pandemic may have thrown this into clearer focus for you and the children in your group or family.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Chat about what the children have done this week.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: six empty cans and something to stand them on; a tennis (or similarly sized) ball

Like David defeating Goliath with just a sling and a stone, your group are going to try target practice! Arrange the six cans in a pyramid: three at the bottom, two on the second row and one on top. You could play this in teams or individuals, depending on the size and ability of your group. The aim of the game is to see who can knock all the cans down in the lowest number of throws.

If you're online, children can use whatever is to hand. Make sure they don't use anything breakable or valuable, and their throwing area is safe.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: 'armour' (cardboard armour would be ideal); 1kg bag of flour or sugar; crown; beard; one sheep; food; five smooth stones and sling (or sling shot)

Tell the story of David and Goliath, by asking the children to act it out as you tell it. Ask a leader to be Goliath and give the other parts to the children (if you're online, ask the actors to get their own props or mime holding or wearing them), asking them to act out what you're describing in the story:

The Philistines and the Israelites were preparing for battle, and both armies were camping each side of a valley. The Philistines' champion soldier was a man called Goliath. *Ask someone to be Goliath. Give them some armour to wear for the part!*

Goliath was HUGE. He was about 3 metres tall. *Compare this to your height.*

The Bible tells us that he had a bronze helmet on his head and wore armour of bronze weighing 5,000 shekels. *This is about 57kg. Show the bag of flour or sugar and explain that it's 57 times this weight!* The point of his spear weighed 600 shekels! *This is about 58kg – 58 bags of flour or sugar.* His shield bearer went ahead of him. *Ask another child to be the shield bearer, and give them a shield.*

Saul was king of the Israelites. *Ask a child to be Saul and give them a crown and some armour.* Some of the soldiers in his army were David's brothers. *Invite a few to come and be David's brothers. Stand Goliath on one side and Saul and David's brothers on the other.*

Goliath kept challenging the Israelites: "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." *Either give this to Goliath to shout out, or ask them to look threatening while you read it.* Saul and the Israelites were terrified! *They look terrified.*

Jesse and his son David were at home, away from the battle. Jesse was an old man and David was his youngest son, and David was too young to be in the army, so instead he tended the sheep. *Ask for a Jesse and a David. Give Jesse a beard and David a sheep.*

One day Jesse sent David to the army camp to take food to his brothers. Jesse sends David away with some food. When David got to the camp, both armies were gearing up for battle. *Goliath and the brothers do so.*

Goliath kept shouting out his threats. Saul told his armies: "Whoever kills this man will marry my daughter and never have to pay taxes again!" David heard this and went to Saul and said: "Why are you afraid? We have God on our side! I will go and fight him."

Saul and David's brothers told David he couldn't, he was too young and too small. But David explained: "When I was a shepherd I protected the sheep from lions and bears. God will help me defeat this Philistine just like he helped me defeat the lions and bears."

Saul was persuaded and let David go to fight Goliath. He tried to give David his armour but David refused. *Saul tries to give his armour to David.* He said: "Goliath has armour, but I have God on my side!" Instead David took five smooth stones and a sling. *Give David these.*

As Goliath and David went to battle each other, Goliath laughed at David. Goliath does so. David took out his sling and shot a stone at Goliath. *Make sure they mime this bit with no real stone-shooting!* It hit Goliath in the forehead and Goliath fell down and died! *Encourage Goliath to be as dramatic as they want! Everyone cheers.*

With a single stone (and help from God), David defeated Goliath and the Israelites won the war against the Philistines!

**CHATTING TOGETHER**

5 MINS

Discuss the story using these questions:

- What have you discovered about Goliath? The Israelites? David?
- Why did David trust God?
- Do you think it would be difficult to trust God if you were about to face Goliath?
- What does this story tell you about God?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: large roll of paper (lining paper would be ideal); pens

Ask the child who played David to lie down so you can draw around them. Draw around the child and write US in big letters on the inside. (If you're working online, do this beforehand.) Remind the group that David was about to do a very scary thing, but he knew that God would be with him. Ask the children to think about what God has done in the past that can remind them that he will be with them in the future. If you have an example from your own life, then share that with the children. Write or draw all the children's ideas inside the person-shape.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: stones; marker pens

Ask the children to take a stone and a pen each, and write on their stone: "God is with me." When they've finished, ask them to hold them in their hands. Ask them to think about the things that feel big, scary or even impossible. Invite them to close their eyes to pray together, and ask that God would help you all remember him when you're scared and that God would help with the scary things we all face, and that God would remind us that he is with us.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.