

Jacob's Ladder

Program 8: A King for the Hebrews

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: Samuel has been a faithful prophet and judge of Israel for many years, but the nation is increasingly under attack, and the people are dissatisfied. They want to be like the other nations, with a king to defend them. The only one way to teach them to trust in God alone is to give them what they want. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: I Samuel 8-10

Teaching Themes: God can use negative experiences to teach us lessons about following Him. We should be thankful for what God has done for us, instead of longing for what others have.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

- 1. Job Descriptions:** Divide your class into three groups. Each group is to write a job description for one of the following: A prophet, a judge, and a king. When students have finished, have the groups share what they came up with. Ask for three volunteers to role play being interviewed for the three positions. The "job candidates" should try to convince the class why they are right for the job.
- 2. A "Perfect" Family:** Place a white board or a large poster board with markers in a central location. Say: *Everyone has a different idea of what a perfect family would be like. Let's try to come up with our own class version of the perfect family.* Have the class discuss and draw the family, their home, their jobs, their vacation, their hobbies, etc. *What types of personalities do the parents have? Are they lenient or strict? Involved or more laid back? Would you like to live in this family? Why or why not?*
- 3. Be Careful What you ask for:** Lead the kids in making a list of some bigger items they might like to have. Things like a pet, a drum set, their own TV or computer, a backyard pool, or a big house might be good. Talk about what would be fun about having these things.

View the 30-minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

1. *Who has been leading the Hebrew people? Do you think they trust the prophet, Samuel, and are willing to follow him?*
2. *Why are the Israelites discontent and looking for a change? What change are they asking for? Describe the people they want to be like.*
3. *What do the Hebrews think a king will do for them? What does Samuel say the king will take from them? When they weigh the pros and cons, what decision do they make?*
4. *In asking for a king, whom are the Israelites rejecting? Why does God agree to give them what they want?*
5. *Why do you think God chose Saul to be the king? Why did Saul doubt his own calling and ability for this job? How does Saul change after he is anointed and confirmed?*

Live the Lesson:

1. Refer to the “perfect family” that the class developed. *Have you ever longed to live in a different family or to change something about your family? Can you think of things you might wish for in terms of your family that might not really be for your best?*
2. *How would you know if you are being ungrateful to God for what you’ve been given?*
3. **Be Careful What You Ask For Follow-up.** Refer to the list the class made in the “Be Careful What You Ask For” activity. Say: *We’ve already discussed why we’d like to have the things on this list. Can you think of some negatives to having any of these things? Could the reality of getting what you want actually end up being a big burden?* Answers might include: Ongoing financial and time commitments, less time to spend on other important things, negative influences of TV, etc.
4. As a class, come up with some good things to ask God for. The fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-23) might be a good place to start. Encourage each person to choose one of these things to ask God for every day this week.

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Program 9: Saul Takes Charge

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: As Israel's new king, Saul's values are changing. His preoccupation with power and status have left him little time to consult with God. When Samuel the prophet gives him warning of the consequences to come, Saul must decide whether to turn back to God. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: I Samuel 11-14

Teaching Themes: Pride can keep us from listening to good counsel from fellow believers. We are to follow the leaders God has placed over us, but we must be aware of whether the leaders are following God.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

- 1. Blinded Leader Activity:** Prepare about 10 signs with simple instructions written in large letters. Some examples are: "Turn to the right," "Hop three times," "Take Two steps backwards," and "Flap your arms." Choose one student to be the leader for this demonstration. Put a pair of sunglasses or non-prescription glasses on the leader. Tell the class that this is their leader and they are to follow him or her. The leader will read the instructions and show them the right thing to do. Hold the sign so that all the class can see it and do the activity. After about three instructions, smear the leader's glasses with Vaseline, so he or she can no longer see or lead, but don't tell the class what you're doing. Quietly instruct the leader to pretend to lead even though he can no longer see. Continue to hold up instructions and see how individuals respond. Discuss whether they followed their assigned leader or if they followed the clearly visible signs and why.
- 2. So Many Leaders!** Divide the class into groups of four or five and give each group a piece of paper. Say *Brainstorm the various authorities and leaders you must listen to and obey ... in the home, school, community, state, country.* See which group can come up with the most authority figures. Keep the lists for question #3 under **Live the Lesson**.

View the 30-minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

1. *How has Saul changed since he became king? Think about his personality and his priorities/values. Do you see a specific sin in him?*
2. *What does Saul do to prepare to fight the enemy? What does Samuel do? Why might both be important steps of preparation for the battle?*
3. *How is Saul warned that he needs to follow God? Do you remember how many people remind him of this? Why does he ignore these plain warnings?*
4. *Describe the Queen and King of the other nations. What must Saul do in order to be a good king?*

Live the Lesson:

1. *Does the spiritual walk of parents necessarily impact the spiritual walk of their children? Consider the two prophets Eli and Samuel and their sons (found in I Samuel 2-7 and in Jacob's Ladder episodes # 6 and 7). Now consider Saul and his son Jonathan. How can you build on the good things about your family? How can you overcome the bad things?*
2. Allow various students to try on the foggy glasses from activity #1 in **Take a Pulse**. Think about Saul and how he wouldn't listen to various people who are warning him to remember God. Why won't he listen? How is that like wearing foggy glasses? Do you think you ever have "fog" covering your vision?
3. Bring out the list of leaders from **Take a Pulse** # 2. *What qualities should a good leader have? Why should good leaders try to understand their followers? When would you need to take a stand and not follow the leader? Whose authority is more important than the leader's?*
4. *Do you consider yourself a better leader or a better follower? Why? Do you think it's important to know how to do both well? Make a plan for your class to practice being good leaders and followers this week.*

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