

# 1 SAMUEL 8–10; 13; 15–18

## Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers 1 Samuel 8–10; 13; and 15–18.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

## LDS Study Focus

LDS study material will focus on:

*Ever since the tribes of Israel had settled in the promised land, the Philistines had been an ongoing threat to their safety. Many times in the past, the Lord had delivered the Israelites from their enemies. But now the elders of Israel demanded, “We will have a king ... [to] go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:19–20). The Lord relented, and Saul was anointed king. And yet when the menacing giant Goliath hurled his challenge to the armies of Israel, Saul—like the rest of his army—was “greatly afraid” (1 Samuel 17:11). On that day, it wasn’t King Saul who saved Israel but a humble shepherd boy named David, who was wearing no armor but was clothed with impenetrable faith in the Lord. This battle proved to Israel, and to anyone who has spiritual battles to fight, that “the Lord saveth not with sword and spear” and that “the battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47).*

## Biblical Focus

Up to this point in her history, Israel has had only one king—God Himself. Leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and all the judges were *leaders*, not kings.

The end of the book of Judges sets the stage for the next phase in Israel’s history. **“In those days, Israel had no king, and everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25)**. After generations of failing to follow God’s commands, Israel now saw fit to replace their theocracy with a monarchy. Israel would put their hope in the leadership of a man instead of fully relying on the Lord.

But when Saul was anointed and crowned, all of that changed. He, then David, and Solomon would sit on the throne, heaping financial burdens and other loads on the shoulders of their citizens, just as God had warned (1 Samuel 8:7–18). Even worse yet, after Solomon, his hard-hearted and bigheaded son Rehoboam would rip the kingdom in two. Then, there would be kings in the North (all of whom received big fat Fs on their regal report cards!) and kings in the South (most of whom flunked). Thus, though some blessings came through royalty, many more were the woes.

**The failures of the kings of Israel and Judah left the nation longing for a better, perfect King.** One who would once and for all deliver them from their worst enemies of sin, death, and Satan and who would provide a glorious, prosperous, and eternal kingdom.

## **1 SAMUEL 8–10**

### **God Chooses Saul**

Under the leadership of Samuel, Israel was committed to the LORD and was blessed by him. The ark was returned, and the cities captured by the Philistines were restored to Israel once again. But when Samuel was old, and his sons were unfit to lead, Israel wanted a new leader, a king.

By nature, humans desire to be led and directed. Like the surrounding nations, Israel wanted to be led by a man. **God was not enough for them.** Even after God and Samuel warned Israel concerning the hardships a king would induce, Samuel could not persuade the people otherwise.

Sometimes, we, too, can become fixated on our perceived needs, and loving, logical warnings can do nothing to deter us. But unfortunately, this sin is difficult to identify since so many of our *wants* cloak themselves as *needs*.

How should we characterize Saul? He is handsome, faithful in his work, considerate, and the son of a successful man. Yet, he turned out to be a complex character. Was he humble or insecure? Did he desire to follow God, or did he want the people's approval? However, what was most important was that God chose him.

Callings are a big deal for Mormons, and applications will come up for both Saul and David. Why did the Lord choose both of these men? The LDS study guide reminds its readers that “[O]ur Heavenly Father sees us as who we truly are and who we can become.” According to LDS teaching, “potential” gives a person value in God's eyes. However, as one studies the lives of both Saul and David, neither man improves over time. Rather, they become worse! This could lead one to wonder if God has low standards or is ignorant. Christians know that God chooses us according to *his* mercy and grace.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- **Why did Israel want to be like the surrounding nations? Do you need to be like the others around you? Is it always wrong to want to fit in? Why or why not?**
- **How did God, through the person of Jesus, become like the world around him? How did God, through the person of Jesus, set himself apart?**
- **What makes a good leader? What does humility mean?**
- **1 Samuel 10:9 says, “God changed Saul’s heart.” What does this imply? How can this verse comfort us as we fulfill our life callings?**
- **What fears do you have when you are loved for your potential? What happens to your fears when you are loved no matter what?**

### **Sharing Personally:**

*In 1 Samuel 8–10, when I see the kind of man God chose to be the first king of Israel, it reminds me that God does not choose us based on our current production or future potential. Instead, he loves us and calls us because of who he is, not who we are or what we will do or become. Therefore, as one called by God and given faith in Jesus’ perfect work for me, I can now serve him faithfully, not out of fear of losing my position with him, but because I am securely his.*

## **1 SAMUEL 13, 15**

### **Saul Offers Up the Burnt Offering (1 Samuel 13)**

No doubt the circumstances for this blunder were terrifying. Saul must have felt like he was between a rock and a hard place. In fear, the army was scattering, and the numbers were dwindling. From a human perspective, hope was rapidly dying. Nevertheless, Saul knew he needed the Lord, and he needed him immediately. Sacrifices were only to be done by one from the tribe of Levi. But because of the circumstances, Saul, the Benjamite, justified making that sacrifice himself.

What if Saul had waited? Would the circumstances have gotten worse? Probably. As seen elsewhere in Israel's history, God tends to act when all reasonable hope is gone. Saul's sin was evidence that he lacked trust in God. Saul's actions showed that he was beginning to rely more on himself and less on the Lord.

There are many times and many ways that we sinful humans decide it is best to take matters into our own hands. We fail to trust that God will provide for us and preserve us at the appropriate time and in his planned and proper way. This failure to trust happens not just with day-to-day things but with eternal life things. Adding ourselves and our deeds into the eternal life equation, when God clearly says it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is another example of failing to trust in God.

### **The Battle with the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15)**

Shortly after leaving Egypt, the Amalekites, descendants of Esau, attacked the Israelites in the wilderness. The Israelites miraculously won this battle while Moses held up his hands. God cursed the Amalekites promising that Israel would blot out their memory of them one day. Now it was time for God to make good on his word. Because this was divine judgment, everything was to be destroyed.

Can you see Saul's disconnect with God's plan? Saul was unwilling to do the will of God if it did not suit him. Instead, Saul viewed the battle politically and used it to advance Israel as he, King Saul, saw fit.

Saul thought he could appease Samuel and God through manipulation. He wanted to hide the severity of his disobedience behind a good work of sorts. But Saul could not fool God. In God's eyes, Saul's actions were the same as idolatry.

Saul's attitude towards his sin is noteworthy and relatable. Notice how easily he justifies his sin. A casual attitude toward sin comes to us naturally. We start thinking of sins as *mistakes* or *blunders* rather than *disobedience*. If we make mistakes, especially one that makes us look bad in front of others, we immediately seek to cover them by doing something good. We'd rather hide our blunders than fully confess how deeply sinful we are. Our ego prefers to "fix" our problems rather than experience the humiliation that comes with repentance. (King David will fall into a similar pattern in next week's readings). The depreciation of sin is always dangerous!

Samuel rebuked Saul, and it worked! Saul confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness! At this point, Saul still had faith in the LORD (1 Samuel 15:31). Even though God forgave him, Saul still would receive the earthly consequences for his disobedience. Later chapters reveal that Saul's sins lead to more devastating spiritual consequences.

### Conversation Starters:

- **Can you name Bible stories that Saul should have known about where God rescues the hopeless? Why did God require that the king know and study the Word (Deuteronomy 17:14–18)?**
- **In what ways do we minimize sin?** (Christians, you need to lead by example in this question. Mormon theology already minimizes sin; therefore, they may struggle to answer this.)
- **What should you do if you know you should be sorry, but your heart is not?**
- **What was Saul’s motivation for his disobedience (1 Samuel 15:24)? How can the fear of others (insecurity) influence your decisions?**
- **Can you think of ways in which Jesus obeyed instead of being afraid of the opinions of others?**
- **What does it mean to find our security in Christ?**

### Sharing Personally:

*What King Saul did in 1 Samuel 13, offering a sacrifice that was not his to make, is not that surprising. There are many times and many ways that we sinful humans decide it is best to take matters into our own hands. We fail to trust that God will provide for us and preserve us at the appropriate time and in his planned and proper way. This failure to trust happens not just with day-to-day things but with eternal life things. Adding ourselves and our deeds into the eternal life equation, when God clearly says it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is another example of failing to trust in God.*

## **1 SAMUEL 16–17**

### **Saul Rejected, and David Anointed (1 Samuel 16)**

God rejected Saul as king because of his lack of faith and disobedience. But God had in mind a new leader and had been preparing him since before his birth. David was a descendant of both Rahab and Ruth. So, he came from a family that God had sculpted by grace.

Samuel must have felt dismayed and defeated after God rejected King Saul. God had warned Israel about the tribulations a king would bring, and Saul fulfilled the warning. It must have been a comfort when God emphasized he would choose the next king by looking at his heart. Without more explanation, we might assume God would pick a man who was kind, loving, brave, honest, etc. But David is described as a man after God's own heart; (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), a man with a heart of faith. **As you study David this week and next, consider what this truly means and openly discuss it with your LDS friends.**

Now that Saul had rejected God, he had also lost his protection. An evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. At first, this isn't very clear! Why is God sending evil spirits? Does this fit into what we know about the character of God? A heart that was empty of faith was open and could be occupied by an evil spirit. God sent the spirit as if to say, *"This is a taste of what eternity will be like without me."*

Saul had not run out of time to repent and turn back to God. God pursued the heart of faithless Saul until his death. It is also interesting to think about the power of David's music over the evil spirit. The sound of praise and worship temporarily banished it!

### **Goliath (1 Samuel 17)**

Take note of the thorough description of Goliath. The Israelite army looked at his *outward appearance* and was shocked and terrified because of it. Goliath was already winning the battle because he had caused Israel to be stricken with spiritual amnesia. Israel forgot how the Lord had rescued them from even greater enemies in generations past. They forgot about the promises he had made to preserve them. They forgot that the LORD was on their side.

Any situation that challenges our faith in the promises of God can be considered a *Goliath* in our life.

The David and Goliath match set up a fabulous picture of our salvation story! Goliath suggested that the battle be fought and decided through single combat warriors. Representatives from each side would duel to determine the winner for both nations. Thus, David is a type of Christ.

Jesus is our single combat warrior who faced sin on our behalf. He was the perfect substitute for all of humanity. He won the war and gave the victory to us.

Mormons focus primarily on Jesus as an example rather than as a substitute. Studying this story with them will allow you to talk about why WE, like the Israelites, needed a replacement to stand in and win the war against sin, death, and Satan.

### Conversation Starters:

- **Why is it both terrifying and comforting to know that God looks at the heart?**
- **What trials or temptations can cause us to forget God and his promises?**
- **The David and Goliath story is filled with sin and salvation pictures. Enjoy analyzing the comparisons.**
  - **What hopeless battle did we face?**
  - **How is Goliath similar to our greatest enemy, sin?**
  - **How are we like Israel? Did Israel deserve the victory?**
  - **How is David a Christ-like figure?**

### Sharing Personally:

*In 1 Samuel 17, the David and Goliath match sets up a fabulous picture of our salvation story! Goliath suggested that the battle be fought and decided through single combat warriors. Representatives from each side would duel to determine the winner for both nations. Thus, David is a type of Christ. Jesus is our single combat warrior who faced sin on our behalf. He was the perfect substitute for all of humanity. He won the war and gave the victory to us. We, like the Israelites, needed a replacement to stand in and win the battle against the imposing and impossible to defeat enemies of sin, death, and Satan.*

## **1 SAMUEL 18**

The chaos of Saul's heart, paired with his power, will influence the rest of his reign as king of Israel, causing turmoil all around him. Christians in an unbelieving world can relate as we are affected by the actions of hearts ruled by sin in positions of power. At times, it all feels out of control. Yet God is working so that all will work out for the good of those who love him.

In previous chapters, we studied Saul's struggle with insecurity. Now that Saul has fully broken his relationship with God, his insecurities have multiplied and manifested in pride, jealousy, hatred, paranoia, manipulation, and murder.

Jonathan's heart starkly contrasted with his father's. Earthly speaking, David should have been his number one enemy. Instead, Jonathan had everything to lose as David grew in power and popularity. If there weren't so many verses that described their selfless friendship, we might assume that Jonathan was using David as he followed the advice to *keep your enemies close*. *Instead*, Jonathan's ability to selflessly love David is nothing short of miraculous.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- **How did Saul's insecurities affect his relationships with his daughters? His son? His best warrior? How do our insecurities affect our relationships?**
- **What does it mean to be secure in Christ?**
- **Read [John 15:13](#). How does this verse connect to the friendship of Jonathan and David? Who is our greatest friend?**
- **Insecurity gives birth to all sorts of dark sins. To what does security in Christ give birth?**

### **Sharing Personally:**

*In 1 Samuel 18, I'm struck by the stark contrast between King Saul and his son Jonathan. On the one hand, Saul is paranoid about David's growing power and influence and deems to harm him. But on the other hand, Jonathan, who does have everything to lose if David takes his father's place, is kind and generous to his beloved friend David.*

*Jonathan, filled with faith in God, trusted God's plan even if that plan didn't include him becoming the next king. With love for God and David, Jonathan cared for him and ensured his protection even above his livelihood and security.*

*Jonathan's love reminds me of Jesus' love for you and me.*