

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER 04 2023

trading leaders

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 8–14.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 59 and 60.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Samuel was getting old, and his sons were far from ready to take over leadership positions in Israel. Israel had been a theocracy, but the people were clamoring for the kind of government they saw in the nations around them. Although God knew what the tragic consequences would be, He gave them what they asked for. Therefore, He chose Saul to be their king. While the people of Israel were happy, Saul was not known for making the best decisions. As we read the story we are reminded of what it takes to be a strong and God-centered leader.

We are hoping to use this lesson to bring about a better understanding of God-led leadership and to have the students realize that they are all being called for leadership positions in the kingdom of heaven. By assessing their characters they will take a hard look into what would make them good leaders. As well, they will learn what they can do in order to become better leaders in their realm of influence.

An interesting side note is the fact that while God did not approve of the idea of a king for Israel, He allowed and finally chose the king Himself. This makes for an interesting discussion point during the lesson.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know the story of Saul's rise to power and what happened then. *(Know)*
- Get a feel for what makes a good leader and what makes a bad leader. *(Feel)*
- Look for leadership opportunities within their scope of influence. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17: "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Discuss what would be the natural outcome of following "man's plan" as they described it in the *What Do You Think?* activity. Discuss what might be the consequences of following "God's plan" as they described it. Then discuss what type of leadership abilities would emerge in middle life for a person who followed either of the plans you have discussed.

What might this activity say about the qualities to look for when voting for a leader?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk."—Unknown.

As a senior in college I was asked to be a substitute PE teacher in the local elementary school. My first day was exciting! I couldn't wait to be called coach by the little kids I would be teaching. I went to my first class, which happened to be a third-grade class of very excited kids. As I left the classroom with them I made the mistake of going first and assuming that they would stay behind me as we walked to the playing field. I soon learned the very valuable lesson of the quote at the beginning of this story.

Within a few minutes I had third graders bouncing off the walls in the hallways. I had teachers coming out to find out what was happening and what was so loud. I shouted to get their attention, and then I finally had to use the whistle to get them to listen to me.

I learned something that day—sometimes you have to lead from behind. What that means is this—sometimes it is important to help people get to where they are going by gently encouraging them to move ahead rather than to run before them and assume they are following. This is sometimes a much harder way to lead, but it can be much more rewarding in the end for everyone involved.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Not everyone is born a leader; some of us have to learn how to be effective leaders. Saul was not a very quick learner. From his reluctance to lead, to his misunderstanding of his power and even to his abuse and arrogance of power, Saul did not always do what was best for the people with whose care he had been entrusted.

How do we choose to care for those we are responsible for and to? Do we become prideful and arrogant in this process or do we continue to lead from gentle encouragement with care and love for those we are supposed to be leading? Perhaps an even bigger question is: Do we know where we are going? These are good questions to ponder as we prepare to lead young people to the foot of the cross.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- *Underline* the specific commands God gives the children of Israel in this story.
- What promises does God make in this story?
- *Circle* the texts that indicate God does not approve of this plan to have a king.
- *Highlight* the moments when it seems Saul is reluctant to become the king of Israel.
- *Put a square around* those words that seem to evoke emotion as you read the story. What sort of emotions do they evoke in you? Why do you think that is?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

1 Thessalonians 2:6-9; Proverbs 29:18; Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 4:12, 13.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

It is important to remember the Israelites' state of mind at the time of this story. Besides being jealous of the cultures around them, they were also scared for their future because they knew that Samuel's sons were not to be trusted. Rather than simply trusting God, they were eager to take matters into their own hands so that they might have a king to judge them. Perhaps it was not even so much that they did not

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

The Socratic Method

Most of us have heard of Socrates, the great Greek philosopher. However, did you know there is a particular style of guided questioning that is given his name? This method is used in many law schools as a way of helping students think through a topic logically and arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion without having been "told."

The basic method is to ask logical, incremental, step-by-step questions pertaining to the story or topic. The teacher does not "tell" or lecture. The teacher needs to think through the logical progression of thought they would like to follow beforehand. However, student answers may make it necessary to adapt the preplanned questions in order to get to the final point the teacher hopes to reach. This method keeps students involved and feeling as if they are discovering truth for themselves.

For most Sabbath School teachers this method may require too much preparation (try searching "Socratic method" on the internet); however, the basic concept of leading students to learning through sequential questioning can be adapted and bring significant rewards to both students and teachers.

In this week's story there are many lessons about leadership. Here are some tips as you lead the class to insight through careful questioning:

1. Keep the discussion focused.
2. Keep the discussion intellectually responsible.
3. Stimulate the discussion with probing questions.
4. Periodically summarize what has and what has not been dealt with and/or resolved.
5. Draw as many students as possible into the discussion.

trust God—but they were fearful of what might happen to them.

It is interesting that they would want a king in the fashion of those countries around them. You see, the yoke of servitude to an ancient king at that time was exceedingly heavy. It was not like some of the freedoms that we observe today. It was at times unjust and very authoritarian. But still the children of Israel seemed to want something tangible so they could feel as if they were part of the society around them. Perhaps it was jealousy and envy, perhaps simply foolish pride that prompted them to ask God for a king.

It is interesting that even though God knew it was

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Patriarchs and Prophets. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

not the best for them, He was willing to allow the children of Israel a chance to decide their own fate. This speaks to the loving kindness of God, as well as to His wisdom. God could have shown His authority by not allowing a king to be put in place. But God often allows us to learn the lessons that arise from the consequences of following a path we think is better than His.

Another important note is that Saul was what one would look for in a king at first glance. It is noted that he was very tall, some even proposing that he was close to seven feet in stature! He was stately and good looking, always a plus in a leader, and seemed to be a great choice for a king. Even though he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, he was still the kind of person people would follow.

Samuel was called a seer at that time, meaning one who received visions from God. This is not to be confused with a more modern interpretation of the word, which means more of a fortune-teller. Samuel was considered the conduit through whom God governed His people.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students write down the name of one or two leaders they would be willing to follow. Then have them write the characteristics that attract them to these leaders. Follow with these questions:

1. Who were the leaders you chose?
2. Why did you choose them? What characteristics do they have that attract you?
3. Do you find yourself with any of these characteristics?
4. How many of these characteristics did Jesus exhibit?
5. What, in your estimation, makes a good leader?
6. Was Saul this type of leader?

Close with a prayer that your students might become great leaders.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This week was all about leadership. We can look at the leadership of God through Samuel and the leadership of Saul and see whose was better for the children of Israel. We want the students to ask the question "Who am I going to follow?" and, of course, we are hoping their answer will be "God."

Perhaps young people haven't had a chance to think critically about what makes a good leader. We all follow intuitively those we trust or see as responsible; but this week, let's be more intentional about how we approach those we follow and seek to bring some real thoughtful discretion into the process.

Working with young people is always a bit scary in that they are more than willing to be totally honest about themselves and those around them. This is good for the discussion, but will also challenge us as leaders to be the kind of leaders we are speaking about.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 59 and 60.

LESSON 5

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 8–14.
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Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

"When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of the theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. . . . Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity. Jealousy and envy sprang up between the tribes. . . . As they departed from obedience to God's law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became widespread throughout Israel" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 603).

key texts

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said. 'We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.' "

(1 Samuel 8:19, 20, NIV)

"The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts."

(1 Samuel 2:7, NIV)

what do you think?

Would you rather depend on how God leads you or on how human culture leads you? Look at these scenarios and write down what God has planned as opposed to what man has planned:

- Tempted to take revenge on someone who has wronged you:

God's plan _____

_____

Man's plan _____

_____

- Tempted to gossip:

God's plan _____

_____

Man's plan _____

_____

- Tempted to steal something you want but cannot afford:

God's plan _____

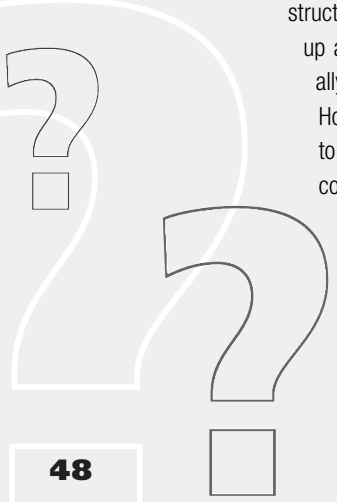
_____

Man's plan _____

_____

did you know?

The word "theocracy" comes from the Greek *theokratia*, which is by definition a government directly guided by God. This was the governmental structure God had set up and which was actually working well in Israel. However, the people wanted to be like their neighboring countries and have a king they could call their own. Sounds as if they might have given in to some peer pressure, doesn't it?



INTO THE STORY

"Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, 'Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over his inheritance? When you leave me today.

". . . three men going up to worship God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.

" 'After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.' . . .

"As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. . . .

"Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you." But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, "No, appoint a king over us." So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.'

"When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was taken. Finally Saul son of Kish was taken. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they inquired further of the LORD, 'Has the man come here yet?'

"And the LORD said, 'Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies.'

"They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, 'Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.'

"Then the people shouted, 'Long live the king!' "

(1 Samuel 10:1-7, 9, 17-24, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What did you think of the introduction speech that Samuel gave to the people before introducing Saul? (verses 17-19) Would you like to be introduced that way?

_____
_____
_____

What prompted the people of Israel to want a human king?

_____
_____
_____

How do you think choosing to be ruled by a human king as opposed to by God was a bad idea for the Israelites?

_____
_____
_____

What is the background of Samuel's sons (1 Samuel 8)? How do you think these activities might have played into the people's desire for a king?

_____
_____
_____

What themes do you see displayed in this reading?

_____
_____
_____

Why was Samuel so specific in the instructions that he gave to Saul?

_____
_____
_____

In what ways do you think Saul had what it took to lead a group of people? In what ways didn't he?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"If it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully" **(Romans 12:8, NIV).**

"When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior' " **(Judges 6:12, NIV).**

"He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens" **(Exodus 18:25, NIV).**

"The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly" **(1 Chronicles 29:9, NIV).**

further insight

"The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God. Ever should he remember that with the call to work comes the call to walk circumspectly before his fellow men. He is to stand before God in the attitude of a learner. Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying His commands that a man is made truly great."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 30, 31.

Sabbath

Read James 4:7.

Take time to do the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. Do you think it would be more difficult to do what people would have you do or what God would have you do? It seems that we often do things to impress other people, and those things are rarely what God asks us to do. Even the children of Israel tried to impress their neighbors by obtaining a human king, when they already had the Creator of the universe as their leader. Seems crazy, doesn't it?

What can you do to counteract these influences in your life?

Sunday

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Read *Into the Story* about how Saul became the king of Israel. Do the questions in *Out of the Story.* What do you think was God's attitude as reflected through His prophet Samuel? Do you think it was happy, sad, or mad? Spend some time writing the emotions you would feel if you were leading a group of people who just couldn't seem to listen to you and take you seriously.

The Scripture story says that God's Spirit changed Saul into a different person. How has God's Spirit changed you? In what ways do you still need His Spirit to work in your life?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 2:7 and 8:19, 20.

Read the *Key Text* and see how the people reacted to having a king. Why do you think they were excited to have a human king when they had the King of the universe as their leader? Do you think they understood what God had been doing through Samuel for all this time? Do you think they were happy that God listened to their desire for a king? Explain.

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 14:30.

The *Flashlight* section gives us some insights from inspired commentary on the texts we have been studying. Ellen White uses a few words that are interesting; "jealousy" and "envy" are the first two that jump off the page. Do these words have any meaning in your life? Have you ever asked for things out of jealousy and/or envy? Have they ever been the motivating factor in purchasing something, saying something, or looking or acting a certain way? It is a good time to ponder what motivates us to do the things we do. Usually, a negative outcome occurs when we do something out of jealousy and envy.

Wednesday

The quotes from the *Punch Lines* and *Other Eyes* deal specifically with leadership. You may want to read 1 Samuel 19 to see what kind of leader Saul became. He did not do a great job. The quotes show us some qualities of a good leader. It is safe to say that a good leader acts in the best interest of the group he or she is leading. Saul had a pretty rough time with that approach to leadership during his tenure as king of Israel. Think about how you would be if you were king. Would you be like Samuel and follow God's leading? Would you be like Saul? How about David or Solomon?

Often we are critical of those in charge, but we rarely think about what we would do given a certain situation. List the qualities you have that would make you a good king or queen. If you are really brave, give your list to someone else to verify that you are who you think you are.

Thursday

If you have the book or a computer available, read chapter 60 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. (Or listen to it on www.cornerstoneconnections/net.) What you will see are the many mistakes and character flaws that were exhibited by Saul during his reign. In his pride he ordered his son Jonathan be put to death. You should have already thought about those characteristics you have that would make you a great leader; now take some time to think about those aspects of your character that are not so great. What can you do to eliminate those character traits so that you might be more effectively used by God and not fall into the traps that Saul found himself trying to muddle through?

Friday

Read Romans 12:9-13.

You have seen what the people asked God to do—give them a king. You have seen the kind of king Saul turned out to be—a weak one. You may have even looked inside yourself to see what kind of leader you might be. Now take a minute to think about what type of people you would like to lead and how you might be able to do that. The world and the church are in need of thoughtful leaders, whether it be in business, politics, sports, music, entertainment, academics, or even working at the neighborhood fast-food restaurant. What leadership role do you think God might have for you?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 59 and 60.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.