

Unit 1

GOD THE KING

1–2 Samuel

Memory Verses

And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

—1 SAMUEL 15:22-23

Writers

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When We Demand a King...

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Our holiness is expressed in our dependence on God as the true King, not in our desire for substitutes.

For most people the idea of “God” is a welcome thought, yet there are those who reject the notion of a higher power. The tension for most people isn’t whether or not God exists but how much authority this God has in their lives. Many seem to be okay with God as long as He is just a spiritually uplifting thought or someone to turn to in hard times. But what about a God who dictates the purpose and shape of their lives? The notion of an intrusive, obedience-demanding deity is offensive. And because many do not see the evidence of God’s provision in their lives, they do not trust Him and His ways for their well-being.

? Have you ever heard the phrase “My God is like...” or “My God would never do...”? What do these phrases communicate about one’s view of God?

As we resume our journey through the biblical narrative, we move from the period of the judges into the period of the kings. In this session we see the Israelites rejecting God as their King by demanding a human king to rule over them. This desire revealed that the Israelites did not believe God was sufficient for them. Their sinful demand opened the door for enslavement and made them resemble the other nations. Although today we may not demand a monarch, we search for “kings” to provide security for us. Israel’s story reminds us of the need to be fully satisfied in God as the true King.

1. When we demand a king, we admit that God is not enough for us (1 Sam. 8:1-9).

¹ When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

Samuel sensed that the people’s request represented a lack of trust in God. God was supposed to be their true King, as they were to depend on Him for everything. But the people were asking for something *more than* God to bring them security. The people had not rejected God outright; they were, in effect, saying, “God, yes, we want You, but we also need a guarantee of this, and that, and this, and that.”

In Israel’s story, we see two ways to reject God: one is to reject Him outright; the other is to say you follow Him but then not really depend on Him. This second form of rebellion is expressed whenever you insist on a number of other things to be present in your life before you can feel secure (ex. job, marriage, health, safety).

It would be so much easier to trust God if we could control Him, but we cannot. So, too often we create a list of requirements in addition to God. We will “follow” Him, but with our own stipulations.

Voices from the Church

“The Lord reigns, not the idols. Not money or power. Not the rich or powerful. Not the beautiful. Not the nicest people, not the worst ones. Not companies or CEOs. Not human kings or presidents. The Lord reigns, and that is our only hope.”¹

—Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation



What are some things that make you feel secure?



What are the signs that we are trusting in these things for our security and not in God alone?

God called their request for a king disobedience, but then He acquiesced. If this request was so bad, why did God give it to them? Why not simply say no? This is why: God will sometimes answer your prayers to let you learn the hard way that your motivation was wrong.

The reverse is also true. Some of God’s greatest mercies to us come in the form of unanswered prayers. Some people get mad at God for not answering their prayers, but the greatest blessing God could ever give is the ability to be happy in Him alone. Sometimes He has to teach us that by withholding blessings that we think would be beneficial.

To clarify, it is not wrong to ask God for good things. The problem comes when a person craves those things and feels like he or she could not be happy or secure without them. This is what was at the root of Israel’s request for a king.



Voices from the Church

“The reason the Israelites give betrays their apostasy, an abandonment of their missional calling...They wanted to be ‘like the other nations’—precisely what God had called Israel *not* to be.”²

—Michael Goheen



Have you ever received something that you really wanted only to feel unsatisfied after you got it? Explain.

2. When we demand a king, we open the door to enslavement (1 Sam. 8:10-18).

¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹ He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

Samuel didn't hold back when he foretold the consequences of Israel's demand for a king. The dominant word in this description is *take*: the king will *take* your sons and daughters; he will *take* your crops and your lands; he will *take* the best years of your lives—he will exploit you and all your resources for himself.

The irony here is tremendous. The Israelites looked to a king to guarantee prosperity and security. What they would receive instead were kings who would take those things from them. They wanted a king whom they could control. Instead, their kings would wind up controlling them. What they thought would empower them would actually enslave them!

This is an Old Testament version of a New Testament principle: *When you have other kings besides God, those kings do not save you; they enslave you.* Whatever you depend on for happiness and security, you become the slave of that thing. For example:

<p>If you have to have a <i>certain kind of relationship</i> to be happy...</p>	<p><i>You become the slave of that relationship.</i></p>
<p>If you have to be <i>successful</i> to find fulfillment...</p>	<p><i>You become the slave of success.</i></p>
<p>If you have to have some <i>physical escape</i> to release stress or feel relaxed...</p>	<p><i>It can quickly enslave you.</i></p>



What are some examples of things in life that “promise” to give us something but instead “take” from us?

Every life has a “king.” A king in your life is whatever you must have in order to be happy and secure. And kings make all of their subjects into servants. The apostle Paul said it this way: “Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods” (Gal. 4:8). Or as Bob Dylan sang, “You’ve gotta serve somebody.” There are no exceptions. You are either submitted to Someone who brings life—God—or you are enslaved to something that brings death.



Voices from Church History

“The power of sin is broken by new power that is greater... Man now transcends his old self. He finds himself anew in his new resurrection life in Christ.”³

—E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928)



Where do you find yourself turning for fulfillment other than God?



How do these “lesser kings” fail to deliver on their promise?

3. When we demand a king, we look just like everyone else (1 Sam. 8:19-22).

¹⁹ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “Go every man to his city.”

Even though Israel had been warned that a king would ultimately abuse his power, they still demanded one. They wanted someone they could visibly see who would “fight their battles.” They were forfeiting the very thing that set them apart from every other nation. God is not like a human king, who will abuse his power and unfairly take from his people. God is a loving Father who has gone to great lengths to rescue and save His people. Yet Israel wanted to be like every other nation.

Similarly, when people who have been redeemed by Christ look to things in this world for protection, security, and validation, they start to look like everyone else. Forgetting their identity and the love that comes from a restored relationship with God, they become bound to a “king” they think will satisfy them. This is not what God intended for His people. This is not what He intends for you. He wants you to know the love and assurance that comes from knowing Christ. He doesn’t want you to obsess over things in this world that hold only empty promises.




How does the assurance of God’s love for us break the power of sin in our lives?

God warned the people of Israel of all the bad consequences of receiving a king. But they demanded one anyway. In the next few chapters, we see how God gave them exactly what they asked for. King Saul promised change, gave the people hope they could believe in, and guaranteed that Israel’s status in the world would be restored.

But after a good start, Saul started to do exactly what God said he would. He started to use the people for his own advantage. He turned out to be a self-idolizing, self-willed tyrant.

All earthly kings will disappoint. We have the chance to make the choice that Israel did not—the choice of faith. And we have more evidence to analyze than they did. We have a longer history of God’s faithfulness to reflect upon, more stories of His faithfulness in the midst of human faithlessness. Most importantly, we have the cross, the ultimate display of God’s love and faithfulness to us. There is no king we could serve who gave more for us than God did.

Many people find the idea of the Christian God just fine, provided they can institute certain conditions: “As long as God does *this*, prevents me from *that*, and provides me with *this*, then I will follow Him.” But that is not faith at all. That is rejection because conditional obedience is still disobedience. To follow this King, we must step out in faith, with absolutely no conditions and no exceptions. How can we be sure that God will take care of us? Because of the cross, we know He is the King worth trusting with absolutely everything.

 In what ways do we stand out from the world when we are trusting in God alone as King?

 How does standing out in this way aid us in our mission of making disciples?

Conclusion

Our society is full of people willing to make room for God as a piece in the puzzle of their lives. What sets believers apart from the world is that we find true happiness and satisfaction *only* in God Himself. The God who saved us is the same God who sustains us. When we begin to trust God alone with our entire lives, we will look different from those around us.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Israel's demand for an earthly king was a twisted form of a good desire—for God's kingdom to come through His anointed leader. God's big plan incorporated Israel's sinful desire and eventually led to the coming of Jesus, the King of kings.

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

5. Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God's special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to stand out from the world by showing that true happiness and satisfaction can be found only in God.

1. What are some specific ways you will affirm God as King over your life?

2. How can we display our happiness and satisfaction in God in a way that helps others recognize their enslavement to “lesser kings”?

3. Write a prayer asking God to help you point a specific person to the King of kings who provides true happiness and satisfaction—Jesus Christ.

SESSION 1

1. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, eds., "The Lord Reigns," in *The Mission of God Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 596.
2. Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 55.
3. E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), 293.

SESSION 2

1. Oswald Chambers, in *The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Oswald Chambers Publications Association, 2008), 176.
2. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, 2.6, quoted in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel*, ed. John R. Franke, vol. IV in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 256.

SESSION 3

1. D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 25.
2. Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-by-Day* (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 290.
3. Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, 26150, quoted in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel*, ed. John R. Franke, vol. IV in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament*, 273.

SESSION 4

1. Helen Keller, quoted in *Expository Eureka*, by Diana Tham (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) [eBook].
2. Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 95.
3. Augustine, Sermon 385.4, quoted in *Late Have I Loved Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 400.
4. R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 66.
5. Joseph Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 154.
6. Corrie ten Boom, quoted in "Preface," by Elizabeth Sherrill, in *The Hiding Place*, by Corrie ten Boom (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), x.

SESSION 5

1. Nancy Guthrie, *The Son of David* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 161.
2. Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 46.
3. Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985), 41.

SESSION 6

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation, in Creation and Fall & Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 132.
2. Adrian Rogers, in *Adrianism: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers*, vol. 1 (Memphis: Love Worth Finding, 2006), 114.
3. Trevin Wax, "The Gospel and Repentance," *LifeWay Pastors* [online], 12 May 2015 [cited 8 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.lifeway.com.

SESSION 7

1. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 2006).
2. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 288.
3. Martin Luther, in *What Luther Says*, comp. Ewald M. Plass (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1453.
4. George Whitefield, "An Exhortation to the People of God Not to Be Discouraged in Their Way, by the Scoffs and Contempt of Wicked Men," in *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London: Henry Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828), 606.

SESSION 8

1. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1997), 2.
2. Ambrose, *Six Days of Creation*, 1.4.12, quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, ed. J. Robert Wright, vol. IX in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 7.
3. David K. Stabnow, in *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 1035, n. 3:11-12.
4. Jonathan Leeman, "Wisdom," *The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide* (Winter 2012-13): 113.

SESSION 9

1. "Vision," Burj Khalifa [online], 2015 [cited 19 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.burjkhalifa.ae.
2. Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 717.
3. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (San Diego: Harvest, 1964), 4-5, quoted in "The perfect church service," Tolle Lege [online], 14 November 2009 [cited 19 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: tollelege.wordpress.com.
4. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 401.

SESSION 10

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine, 1983), 274.
2. D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 83.
3. John Wesley, "Sermon LXXXIII: On Spiritual Idolatry," vol. 2 in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1835), 188.
4. Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoirs and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, (London: W. Middleton, 1846), 254.

SESSION 11

1. Daniel Schorn, "Transcript: Tom Brady, Part 3," CBS News [online], 5 November 2005 [cited 20 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.cbsnews.com.
2. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 76-77.
3. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2008), 107.
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SESSION 12

1. Oswald Chambers, in *The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2008), 282.
2. Robert Yarbrough, "Christ and Crocodiles: Suffering and the Goodness of God in Contemporary Perspective," in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 31.
3. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2008), 78.

SESSION 13

1. N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 23.
2. Jonathan Leeman, "Psalms: Songs for New Creation Hearts," *The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide* (Winter 2012-13): 96.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1970), 14-15.
4. Ambrose, *On the Christian Faith*, 2.12.102, quoted in *Psalms 51–150*, ed. Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, vol. VIII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 263.



PLAYLIST

To download this quarter's recommended playlist of songs, go to LifeWayWorship.com/GospelProject.

Get the following collection of great songs and artists:

- “Christ Is Enough”—Hillsong Live
- “Come as You Are”—Crowder
- “God I Look to You”—Bethel Music
- “Awesome”—Charles Jenkins
- “God and King”—Gateway Worship
- “What a Savior”—Laura Story
- “Good, Good Father”—Housefires
- “The Fear of the Lord”—Tommy Walker
- “My Heart Is Yours”—Passion
- “Hope and Glory”—Tim Hughes
- “You Hold It All”—Travis Ryan
- “I Am Not Alone”—Kari Jobe
- “Jesus, the Anthem”—Shelly E. Johnson

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THE
**GOSPEL
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CHRONOLOGICAL

The Gospel Project A Kingdom Established

During the time of the judges, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It was evident that a king was needed, but he must be God's king and desired for the right reason—to shepherd the people for the glory of God in the world. Though the people desired otherwise, God would raise up a man after His own heart to lead His people. King David was flawed and sinful, but through him God would raise up the King whose kingdom is everlasting—Jesus, the Messiah.

God has ordered His world and His kingdom to work according to wisdom. Therefore, King Solomon rightly asked for wisdom as a gift from God in order to govern the people and to help them shine like a light to the nations. God's wisdom instructs us how to live well and to praise our God, but it also teaches us how to reflect on the meaning of life and the suffering that we experience. For all his wisdom, Solomon still made foolish choices, and this points to our need for a greater Wisdom—Jesus, the very Word of God made flesh for us.

What's Next?

FALL 2016

Volume 5: Prophets and Kings

God the Revealer (1–2 Kings, Isaiah)

God the Pursuer (Prophets, 2 Chronicles)

WINTER 2016-17

Volume 6: Exile and Return

God the Sustainer (Daniel, Ezra)

God the Provider (Esther, Nehemiah, Malachi)

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