



Community Group Discussion Guide

September 29, 2024

1 Samuel 9:1-27; 10:1-27 | Make Way for the King

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter question: If you were suddenly and unexpectedly asked to be the President of the United States, what would your response be?*

NOTE TO CG LEADERS: *Because this guide covers two chapters, 1 Samuel 9-10, the actual Scripture passages are not contained in this document as they normally are. However, a link has been included to aid you in utilizing the biblical passage from the ESV.*

DISCUSS

In 1 Samuel 8, Israel demanded a king like all the other nations, but Samuel warned that there would be consequences of having an Israelite monarchy patterned after a Canaanite model. The request ended rule by judges and amounted to a rejection of God as Israel's king. In spite of this, God agreed to their request and directed Samuel to do the same. God would later use this rejection to raise up the Messiah from David's line.

1 Samuel 9:1-27 and 1 Samuel 10:1-27 narrate the divine selection, prophetic anointing, confirmation, and public acclamation of Israel's first king. God was the guiding hand behind it all. The fundamental questions of 1 Samuel continue to be: What should be the nature of this new Israelite kingship? Will Israel's king become like the kings of the surrounding nations?

⇒ *What kind of king does Israel think it wants? What kind of king does Israel truly need?*

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-5 The first king of Israel was Saul from the tribe of Benjamin (second son of Jacob and Rachel). Saul's name means "asked for." Not only did Saul's family have great wealth, but his father's lengthy genealogy implies Saul had a strong pedigree. Saul himself was an impressive and handsome young man, standing a head taller than anyone else.

⇒ *Why is it noteworthy that Saul is from the tribe of Benjamin rather than the tribe of Judah?*
 ⇒ *Why do you believe Saul's height and appearance are mentioned?*

After the brief introduction of Kish and Saul, we are told that Kish's donkeys were lost. Donkeys as beasts of burden were very valuable. Kish sent out Saul and an unnamed servant to look for the animals. Saul and the servant searched through five different territories but the donkeys were nowhere to be found. When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul was ready to give up. He recognized that he and the servant had been gone for three days and that his father would start worrying about them.

⇒ *Was Saul's journey to find the donkeys mere chance or was it directed by God?*

Read 1 Samuel 9:6-14: At the suggestion of Saul's servant, the two men decided to inquire of a "man of God" in a local city to see if he could tell them where to search for the donkeys. This man was highly respected and "all that he says comes true." After deciding what to give the man of God, Saul and his servant set out to find him. In searching for the seer, they met some young women heading for a well to draw water. In the Bible, a seer was a person who "sees" and was an older term for a prophet. Accompanying the ability to see visions, a seer was given insight into what God was saying through these visions. Apparently, neither Saul nor his servant knew that this prophet was Samuel.

From these young women, Saul learned that Samuel was in town for a special occasion. The people were to have a sacrifice at the high place and Samuel was there to bless the offering. If they hurried they would find him. In God's timing, Saul met Samuel coming toward them on the prophet's way up to the high place.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: The servant's insistence that they inquire of the man of God in the local city, Saul's encounter with Samuel, and all the details of the episode seem to be orchestrated by the unseen hand of God.¹***
- ⇒ ***What three ways is Samuel referred to in verse 6? Why is this significant?***

Read 1 Samuel 9:15-21: In advance of Saul's visit, God had informed Samuel that Saul, a Benjamite, was coming and that the young man was God's choice to be anointed as Israel's first king. Through Saul, God would tend to the cry of His people for deliverance from the Philistines.

It's noteworthy that the word Hebrew word *nagid* for "prince" is used in verse 16. The word can mean "leader" or "ruler" and was initially a military term that referred to the commander of the national militia under the old tribal confederation. Its use here rather than the common Hebrew word *melek* for "king" emphasized the limited nature of Saul's kingship. Perhaps *melek* was also avoided because Yahweh was Israel's true king. It is likely that Saul's kingship was perceived as a conditional appointment based on his faithfulness to serve under the direct lordship of Yahweh and the authority of His prophet.²

- ⇒ ***Does this indicate that the Israelite kingship was to be distinct from the other nations? If so, in what ways? How does this relate to the lordship of Christ?***

On Samuel's way up to the high place to bless the sacrifice, he caught sight of Saul. God indicated to Samuel that this was the man He had spoken about to govern Israel. In verse 17, the ESV uses the phrase "restrain my people." The word restrain can also mean "rule" or "imprison." The majority of times this verb occurs in the Bible, the connotation is negative. The use of it here foreshadows Saul's career as a difficult king. He would "hold back" God's people from receiving His providential blessing designed for them.

- ⇒ ***Why is important for us to have an understanding of the use of Hebrew words in biblical passages like these? (Suggested source: scripture4all.org)***
- ⇒ ***What does the use of these words imply about Israel's first king?***

Saul approached Samuel to ask for directions to the seer's house. Samuel responded to Saul's request in four ways:

- He identified himself to Saul as the seer.
- He offered Saul a personal invitation to an evening banquet at the high place outside the town.
- He informed Saul that the lost donkeys had been found.
- He hinted about the significant destiny awaiting Saul.

Samuel asked Saul, "And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel?" Saul was to be Israel's answer for a king like all the other nations. Samuel's word for desirable can have two meanings. Besides the positive idea of desire used here, the word can mean "sinful craving." Saul was a little perplexed by Samuel's unexpected statements.

- ⇒ ***Was Israel's desire for a king a positive one or more of a "sinful craving?"***
- ⇒ ***Why did Saul show hesitancy at Samuel's words? Do you ever show a similar hesitation when God makes it clear His desire for you?***

Read 1 Samuel 9:22-27: Without warning, Saul became the center of attention in the festival hall, being given a place of honor and a specially designated portion of food. After the special meal, Saul spent the night in Ramah as a guest of Samuel. The next morning Samuel prepared Saul to go on his way. Just as they reached the edge of town, Samuel sent the servant on ahead and told Saul that he had a message from God for him.³

¹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 169). Zondervan.

² Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 163). Zondervan.

³ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 6, p. 73). Holman Reference.

- ⇒ *In all of what has occurred so far between Samuel and Saul, how did God demonstrate His sovereign, providential nature?*
- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when God demonstrated this to you?*
- ⇒ *How has God made His Word known to you?*

Read 1 Samuel 10:1-8: Before Saul left the next morning, Samuel privately poured a flask of olive oil on Saul's head, signifying Saul's divine selection and special empowerment for the office of king. Anointing with a small amount of sacred, spiced olive oil on the top of the head was a practice carried out by priests and prophets in the Old Testament. It indicated that an individual was selected by God to serve as a priest or a king. The act also symbolized the power and presence of God coming upon an individual to enable and empower the person to do the LORD's work.

Prior to Samuel's anointing of Saul, the ritual was restricted in the Old Testament to the tabernacle and its priests. This marks Israel's new monarchy as a divine institution, on a level of the priesthood. Here also, anointing stamps Saul with a special character and privilege because of a unique standing before God.⁴

This ritual of inauguration appears to have had a contractual or covenantal significance with a highly structured and restricted authority handed from God to prophet to king. From this point on the king became known as "the Lord's anointed" or "the Lord's messiah."⁵

- ⇒ *Despite the request of the elders of Israel in 1 Samuel 8, how will Israel's king be unique from the Canaanite kings? How does this relate to Jesus as King?*

Saul's anointing was accompanied by predictions regarding certain events that would occur between the time Saul left Samuel and the time Saul arrived home. Becoming king was drastic change for Saul personally, but it was also revolutionary for the nation. Such radical claims and actions as Samuel took required dramatic confirmation to validate that God had indeed chosen Saul as king of Israel:

1. The message of two men: Two men were to meet Saul near at Zelzah, near Rachel's tomb. They would tell Saul that the lost donkeys had been found and that Saul's father was now worried about him.
 2. The gift of three men: Three men would meet Saul by the great tree of Tabor. These men would be making a pilgrimage to Bethel and carrying three goats, three loaves of bread, and a skin of wine. They would offer Saul two loaves of bread which he must accept.
 3. The procession of prophets: When Saul returned to Gibeah, he would meet a procession of prophets carrying various instruments. They would be prophesying.
 4. The power of the spirit: The Spirit of the LORD would come on Saul, and he would prophesy with the prophets and he would be changed into a different person.⁶
- Samuel told Saul that after these signs were fulfilled he could do whatever the occasion demanded. Samuel assured Saul that God would be with him. Finally, Samuel directed Saul to precede him to Gilgal and to wait for him there for seven days to receive further instructions. At that time, Samuel would sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.⁷

- ⇒ *Why did God deem it necessary to take such steps to validate His selection of Saul as Israel's king?*
- ⇒ *How would assurance of God's presence bring Saul comfort and confidence? How does His presence in your life bring you the same assurance?*

⁴ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 164). Zondervan.

⁵ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 164). Zondervan.

⁶ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 6, p. 73). Holman Reference.

⁷ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (pp. 164–165). Zondervan.

Read 1 Samuel 10:9-13: The events of 1 Samuel 8 started with Saul on a simple mission to find lost donkeys. He wasn't out looking to become a king and appeared to be mystified by the honors being heaped on him. As Saul turned to leave, "God gave him another heart." God was at work in Saul, transforming him into a different person. The predicted events occurred, confirming that Saul was God's choice to become Israel's first king.

The author gives emphasis to the procession of prophets who met Saul at Gibeah. When Saul encountered these prophets, the Spirit of God came upon him and empowered him to join the prophets in prophesying. God's Spirit also prepared Saul for his royal tasks of leadership.

⇒ ***Describe a time when God empowered you for a task you believe He assigned to you. What difference did His empowerment make?***

Saul's uncharacteristic behavior shocked those who knew him. Some wanted to know what had happened to the son of Kish. Others couldn't believe Saul had joined the ranks of the prophets. One local man asked, "And who is their father?" Scholars do not agree about the meaning or intent of this latter question. Some see it as a derisive and degrading attempt to question the circumstances of Saul's birth. Others have suggested that the father mentioned in the question is to be identified with the LORD. This then suggests a positive sense of surprise at the wonder wrought by God.

⇒ ***Have you ever been questioned about something you've done for God? Why do you think you were questioned?***

Read 1 Samuel 10:14-16: Saul's actions provoked questions from his uncle about his search for the donkeys. Saul attempted to placate his uncle by giving a few details about the trip. The mention of Samuel's name brought a response from his uncle, but Saul only told him a part of the story. Though Saul knew of God's plan for him, he did not tell any of his family members at this time. Saul's divine selection remained a secret until God revealed it publicly later.

⇒ ***Has your own family ever questioned your faith? When this happens, are you inclined to not speak fully and freely about what God has done or is doing in your life?***

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-19: Samuel summoned the Israelites together for a national, religious convocation at Mizpah, a city in the tribal territory of Benjamin. Mizpah was the site of Israel's humble repentance and victory in 1 Samuel 7:5-17. Samuel reminded the people that it was Yahweh who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and from all their other enemies.

In spite of this deliverance, Israel had rejected God by demanding a king for all the wrong reasons. Samuel's prophetic pattern of speech was well known throughout the Old Testament for announcing judgment. The announcement of the selection of Saul was inserted in such a way as to be interpreted as an act of divine wrath (Hosea 13:11).⁸

⇒ ***In what ways will Saul's failure as a king prove to be God's judgment on His people?***

The process of publicly identifying the king was to be carried out by first selecting a tribe by which God's choice would come.

Read 1 Samuel 10:20-24: The people presented themselves in successive order before Samuel so that the king could be designated by the casting of lots. In spite of the many references to casting lots in the Old Testament, nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice. Whatever the process, God was in charge of selecting the king.

⁸ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (pp. 166–167). Zondervan.

From all the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. From among the Benjamite tribes, the specific clan of the Matrites was chosen. From this clan, Saul was set apart. In this manner Saul was chosen and given formal recognition as Israel's divinely selected monarch.

Saul failed to appear after having been singled out. It's difficult to know if he was hiding out of humility or cowardice or shyness. In light of the fact that Saul had been prophetically anointed, had received multiple signs confirming his divine appointment, and was empowered by the Spirit of God, this hesitancy to take up the task reflects badly on Saul.

⇒ ***How do Saul's actions foreshadow his later lack of commitment to take up the responsibilities that fell upon a godly ruler?***

After inquiring of God, Saul was eventually found hiding among the supplies and baggage at the edge of the camp. When Saul finally appeared, he was enthusiastically received—in part because he looked like a king, being a head taller than any other Israelite.

⇒ ***Are we inclined to base our acceptance of God's will on things like height and appearance or other trivial standards? What should be the basis of our acceptance?***

Read 1 Samuel 10:25-27: Many scholars see Samuel's words and actions in verse 25 as one of the crucial turning points in Israel's history. The author simply states that Samuel declared the regulations of the kingship to the people and then he wrote them down in a scroll and deposited it at the Mizpah sanctuary alongside other sacred materials before the Lord.

The exact contents of the document are unknown. It most likely contained the stipulations for a king laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. This text implies that a request for a king was not wrong in itself. God gave Moses the prophetic foresight to stipulate the characteristics of the ideal king for Israel. Whatever the contents, the purpose of this document was to distinguish Israel's kingship from that of the surrounding nations and to remind Saul to fear the true King of Israel.

⇒ ***See Genesis 15:18–21; 17:6, 16; 49:8–12. How did God's promises to Israel's ancestors find partial fulfillment in Israel's new monarchy?***

⇒ ***How was this new institution of kingship a link to salvation history and the coming of the Messiah?***

Having finished the convocation, Samuel dismissed the people. Saul returned to his hometown of Gibeah, accompanied by an unknown number of valiant men who would become the core of Israel's military. Eventually, Saul would make Gibeah the capital of his kingdom and his base of military operations.

Several troublemakers publicly objected to Saul's coronation, expressing their doubts about his ability to provide effective leadership. They refused to give Saul the customary tokens of goodwill. Saul responded by keeping silent.

⇒ ***Why are God's chosen leaders never without their detractors?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: God was at work behind the scenes, miraculously bringing Samuel and Saul together, revealing His will to Samuel that he should anoint Saul, bringing dozens of other people into Saul's life as confirmation of his anointing, and finally changing Saul's character through His Spirit.

An awareness that God is at work in the world today should make believers more sensitive to His unexpected and unseen influence in our everyday lives. Not that we should look for the spectacular and miraculous around every bend. But we should recognize and acknowledge His work in our own

lives and in those around us, while also learning to be faithful to attend to the routine, the ordinary, and the familiar—for in these, God also leads and directs His people.⁹

⇒ *Do you spend so much time looking for the miraculous that you miss God’s hand in “your ordinary?”*

⇒ *How can you increase your awareness of God’s work in your life today?*

2. Pray: Praise God for His unseen hand working behind the scenes. Ask Him to give you a greater awareness of His presence and guidance in your life. Pray that He will give you a willing spirit to respond to His Word.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 71-83.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel* pages 158-174.
- *Shepherd’s Notes, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 17-20.

⁹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 173). Zondervan.