



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1 Samuel

### Lesson 6: 1 Samuel 5

As you read through this lesson, try to picture the events as if you were watching a movie. Put a mental voice to each person and imagine their expressions and tone. The books of Samuel contain some of the most vivid descriptions of Israelite history. Imagine yourself watching these events unfold as if you were there.

#### Read 1 Samuel 9:1-2

After the events in Mizpah, the author shifts settings and introduces us to Saul, a young man from the tribe of Benjamin. While the story of how Israel got its first king already started in chapter 8, these verses seem like the beginning of a new story altogether. In a way, the introduction here separates Saul from the events of the last chapter. The writer may have been trying to imply that Saul did not know that Israel sought a king.

**Begin a new column for Saul on your character study sheet. List some of Saul's attributes as detailed in verses 1 and 2. Write down information about Saul's family and tribe.**

#### Read 1 Samuel 9:3-21

**How does God set-up the meeting between Saul and Samuel?**

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The account of the events leading up to Saul's meeting with Samuel reads like a series of coincidences. The donkeys of Kish just "happened" to wander off. Saul and his servant "happened" to wander to Zuph (Samuel's homeland), and the servant just "happened" to suggest that they visit the seer. The reader knows

the seer to be Samuel from his description; the seer lives near Zuph, is a prophet, and "all that he says comes true" (see 1 Samuel 3:19). When Saul realized that he had no gift to bring the seer, his servant "happens" upon a solution. The Hebrew wording used in verse 8 implies that the servant found the silver miraculously and wasn't aware that he had had it (Tsumura 269). It would be like reaching into your coat pocket and finding \$20 dollars. Finally, as Saul neared the seer's home, the seer "happened" to be on his way to the high place to worship.

We know that these events were not merely coincidences; God's providential hand guided Saul directly to the man that would change Saul's life forever. While God used indirect guidance to lead Saul to Samuel, He spoke directly to Samuel to prepare him for Saul. Samuel approached Saul knowing his future, while Saul approached Samuel not even knowing who Samuel was!

**List the plans God made for Saul (v. 16-17)**

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When Saul finally met Samuel, Samuel quickly told him that the donkeys were found and that he shouldn't worry about them anymore. In addition to that, Samuel told Saul that he and his family would be the fulfillment of the nation's desire (v. 20). How would you react if someone told you "You are the answer to all that we've ever asked for?" You would probably react similarly to Saul; his response was basically "Who? Me?" He humbly described his heritage, and said he was from a weak family in a weak tribe. This was only partly true.



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Go back to 1 Samuel 9:1. How is Kish, Saul's father, described?

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Read Judges 20:1-17 and 43-48.

What happened to the tribe of Benjamin?

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While Saul's family was known for its valor, at one point, his ancestral tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out completely because of their support for the sin of Gibeah. Now, one of the descendants of the 600 surviving men is asked to become the hope of Israel. God chose someone from the smallest tribe to have the greatest power in Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 9:22-26

Samuel placed the humble Saul in the most honored position at the feast. Samuel even saved the best portion for Saul, a sign to Saul and to the other guests that Samuel was honoring him. Saul must have felt very confused by this special treatment. As Saul prepared to depart the next day, Samuel finally revealed to Saul what God had planned for him.

Read 1 Samuel 9:27-10:8

By anointing Saul, Samuel showed that he would be set apart for service to God. The only other people ceremonially anointed were the priests. Although Saul wouldn't be serving in the tabernacle, Saul's whole life would be lived in service to God as the "prince" or "ruler" over Israel. The Hebrew word for prince in verse 1 is very interesting in this context. Its meaning is best translated as regent, someone who is reigning in place of the real monarch. Considering that God would always be the true king of Israel, Saul had to be anointed as His proxy ruler (Tsumura 282).

List the signs that Samuel foretells in 10:2-8

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Read 1 Samuel 10:9-13

According to verse 9, all that Samuel prophesied came to pass. When Saul met the prophets, the Spirit of God entered him, and he began to prophesy, just as Samuel had said. Saul was transformed so much by the Holy Spirit that the people who knew him were awed by the change and said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Look up these passages for other instances in which the Spirit of God came upon someone in the Old Testament. Compare the descriptions of the how the Spirit of God enters the person or persons, and the results.

- Exodus 31:1-5

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- Judges 11:29

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- Judges 14:5-6

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- Judges 15:14-20

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- 1 Chronicles 12:16-18

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**How does the Holy Spirit help us now? Use scripture references in your answer.**

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## Read 1 Samuel 10:14-16

Even after all these signs and wonders came to pass, Saul's actions imply that he still doubted his calling. Saul was not yet ready to reveal to his uncle the most important event of his journey and concealed the fact that Samuel anointed him to be king.

## Read 1 Samuel 10:17-24

Even though the Israelites already had an all-powerful king in God, they still desired an earthly king selected by God. The act of casting lots was done throughout Israel's history and often involved the priests using the Urim and Thummim to discern God's divine will. Although we can't be sure exactly how the lots were cast, we can be sure it was done to show that God guided the outcome. Though once Saul is chosen, he is stunningly absent.

**What do Saul's actions reveal about his character and trust in God's appointment?**

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We know from Saul's own words that he saw himself as a person of little significance in Israel (9:21). By hiding from the assignment, he showed little faith in his own ability. While humility is an important virtue, it was not what was being displayed by Saul's actions; Saul simply did not trust the power of God to work through him.

**Reread 1 Samuel 10:9-10. What had God given Saul?**

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The Spirit of God made Saul like a new man, and yet he still seemed to war against it. Others even witnessed the evidence of God working in him when Saul prophesied. The change was so noticeable and amazing it was the basis for a proverb that was used in everyday conversation. After all of this, Saul still held onto his doubts and hid from the responsibilities that God gave him. Saul did not trust God who had endowed him with this gift.

Just like Saul, we often believe that our shortcomings disqualify us for His service. By focusing on our deficiencies, we are actually exhibiting a lack of trust in transformative power of God. We become like Saul; we hide among the baggage even though God has asked us to step forward. We allow our insecurities to distract us from the fact that we are chosen by God, redeemed by his Son, and equipped by his Spirit for good works!

**Has God placed a work before you for which you feel unqualified? Write down some verses that encourage us to focus on the strength we have through Him to fulfill the tasks laid before us.**

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Eventually, God revealed Saul's hiding place and he stood before the people. How ironic is it that the tallest man among the Israelites hid like a coward? Remember this image of the physically impressive man hiding amongst the baggage as it foreshadows his actions throughout most of his reign. Saul will be the man who on the outside has power and strength, while his actions will exhibit a weak and wavering faith in God.



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## Read 1 Samuel 10:25-27

Samuel authored a sort of contract between the people and the king, describing the responsibilities that the king would have. When it says that he set the book before the Lord, it most likely means that it was put in the holy of holies in the tabernacle. In this way, the Israelites recognized God's role in establishing the monarchy and His authority over the king.

Saul's appointment seems anticlimactic. Without fanfare or celebration, he returned to his home accompanied by warriors that God caused to follow him. While some men followed Saul, some of the Israelites dishonored him by withholding gifts. It seems that these "worthless" men doubted Saul's ability just as much as Saul doubted himself.

## Read 1 Samuel 11:1-4

Nahash, most likely the king of the Ammonites, attacked the town of Jabesh-Gilead. He attempted to force the elders of the town to make a treaty with him. Nahash probably knew that a king had been appointed in Israel and hoped to disrupt the unity of Israel by forcing individual cities to make treaties with the Ammonites. Nahash allowed the men of Jabesh-Gilead seven days to seek help from the rest of Israel, hoping that if the city did not receive help from their new king, other cities would hear of it. They would then also lose faith in Saul and would quickly make treaties with the Ammonites.

## Read 1 Samuel 11:5-11

**What enabled Saul to take such mighty action (v. 6)?**

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**Read Judges 21:13-14 (read 1-14 for context if needed). What special connection did Saul's tribe, Benjamin, have with the people of Jabesh-Gilead?**

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**How did the Israelites act upon hearing Saul's call to arms (v. 7)?**

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Nahash's plan backfired. Instead of allowing the attack to divide Israel, Saul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, united the men of Israel to save the people of Jabesh-Gilead. He planned a surprise attack at dawn and used a three-pronged battle plan. The Israelites utterly routed the Ammonites with their large force of 330,000 men and good military tactics. This battle displayed the military might of the man that God had chosen to lead His people. It also united the tribes into one fighting force.

## Read 1 Samuel 11:12-15

These verses describe the actions that Saul and Samuel took to further unify the tribes under the monarchy. Saul was merciful towards the "worthless" men that initially opposed his selection as king. By not seeking vengeance, Saul prevented the creation of any bad-blood between him and the men that doubted his rule. Samuel called for a national gathering to celebrate the victory of the new king and to officially coronate him. As one nation, Israel rejoiced with their king and thanked God for his provision and protection.

## Read 1 Samuel 12:1-13

Samuel used this time of national celebration to step down as the judge of Israel and to show the people their failure in asking for a king. He made two



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key points to prove that a king was unnecessary. The first point was that he was a good and fair judge to the people, a point which the Israelites readily accepted. After providing examples of his own upstanding actions in v. 1-5, Samuel turned to the history of Israel to show the Lord’s faithfulness to His people, despite their rebellious nature. Take a moment to review the actions of the men that Samuel mentioned.

- **Moses and Aaron (Hebrews 11:24-39)**
- **Jerubbaal AKA Gideon (Judges 7)**
- **Bedan or Barak (Judges 4)**
- **Jephthah (Judges 10:6-11:32)**
- **Samuel (1 Samuel 7)**

From crossing the Red Sea to the appointment of the king, the Israelites continually cycled through idolatry, oppression from foreign nations, repentance, and faithful deliverance carried out by God’s appointed judge. Just as Samuel’s behavior did not necessitate the request for a king, neither had God’s treatment of His people. Even so, God still granted their request for a king. Though Saul now ruled, he was still acting as God’s chosen instrument of deliverance for the Israelites.

## Read 1 Samuel 12:14-15

**Compare the language of these verses to Deuteronomy 11:26-28**

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Samuel reframed the words of Moses in the context of the monarchy. He wanted to remind the people that while they had a king, both he and the people still had to serve the Lord in every way if they were to receive the blessings of God. If the people and/or the king chose to rebel against the Lord, then the Lord would be against them. Samuel showed the

people that all Israelites, king included, were subject to the Lord’s authority.

## Read 1 Samuel 12:16-18

Remember that Samuel gave this speech while the people were celebrating a great victory at the hands of their new king. They may have been tempted to think that they were justified in their request for a monarch. God proved that this was not the case. The time of the wheat harvest in early summer was a time of drought in Israel. When the people saw the rain clouds and heard the thunder, they would have known that this could have only been a sign from God. Even though the recent victory made it seem like God approved of having a king, God made sure that his people knew that their request was one of distrust and rejection.

## Read 1 Samuel 12:19-25

The people acknowledged their sin and asked for Samuel’s prayers. Samuel responded with two phrases that seemed to contrast each other. “Do not be afraid” and “you have done all this evil.” He gave the people hope but did not back away from acknowledging their sin. Samuel knew that the God that he served, and that we serve now, despises evil but also gives abundant mercy. While the sin was done, and couldn’t be undone, Samuel encouraged the people to move closer to God anyway. He implored them to follow God whole-heartedly. At the same time, he also proclaimed warnings against falling away.

**List the encouragements and warnings that Samuel gives in 20-22, 24-25.**

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These verses are a great reminder of the choice we must make every moment of every day; will we or won’t we serve the Lord? The Israelites had been asked this question by Moses (Deuteronomy 11:26-



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28), by Joshua (Joshua 24:14-15), and now by Samuel. Each time, the Israelites were told that they would receive great blessings for obedience, and terrible consequences for disobedience. Yet they chose again and again to rebel against their covenant God. Even though Israel rejected Him, God never abandoned the people that He had made for Himself (1 Samuel 12:22). He was, and is faithful, even when we are faithless (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

One final note on Samuel. Remember at the beginning of this speech that Samuel drew attention to his old age (see 12:2). Even though he was later in years, verse 23 says that he didn't stop helping the people of Israel to follow God. Samuel refused to "sin against the Lord" by ceasing to pray for the people. While he had stepped down as judge, he continued to work for the betterment of his people. Samuel did not allow age or lack of position to prevent him from doing what God had called him to do.

**What are some excuses you use, or have heard others use, to avoid godly service?**

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**Continue your character studies of Saul and Samuel. Be sure to provide information about Saul's upbringing and occupation before becoming king. Also, consider what qualities made Saul and Samuel effective leaders of God's people.**