

# Lesson 6: God's Will vs. Our Will

## 1 SAMUEL PROFILE



**Genre:** Narrative History

**Author:** Traditionally, Samuel

**Passage:** 1 Samuel 14:24-47

**Where Is It:** The ninth book of the Old Testament: Ruth, **1 Samuel**, 2 Samuel

**Key Characters:** Samuel, Hannah, Eli, God, Saul, David

**Main Plot:** Samuel emerges as the last judge, and the book details the history of Israel in Canaan from the rule of judges to the rule of kings. Samuel anoints the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.



## THE WORD

**1 Samuel 14:24-47**



## ENGAGE THE WORD

### Lesson Overview: Cultural Dimension

Saul starts off following God's ways, but shortly after becoming king, he grows impatient and takes matters into his own hands. It's easy for our students to relate to Saul's feelings. Typically, adolescents are beginning to undermine authority and detach from their parents. While they may spend a great deal of time reflecting on their place in the world, they do not yet have the ability to discern the gravity and far-reaching consequences of their choices.

Saul wants God to be there for him on his terms. He doesn't listen to God but expects God to be there to answer him when he wants him. This is a good lesson for our students to learn—that, while God is always here for us, if we make our own rules, he may teach us a valuable lesson as well. This lesson will help your students understand the value of integrity and how to live as people of God.

### Biblical Commentary

In the previous lesson, we left off with Samuel conceding to Israel's wishes for a king. God tells Samuel that he will be sending a man who will be the chosen king—Saul. Saul is tall, strong, and handsome, based on the description we read. Yet, despite his kingly stature, he appears weak and unimpressive. When Samuel confronts Saul as the one who will be king, he denies his worth. When he is announced as the chosen one, we find him hiding among baggage.



### Wesleyan Snapshot

#### Free Will

"Although the capacity to turn to God on one's own initiative was lost in the Fall, prevenient grace restores human 'response-ability' and empowers persons to respond in faith to God's love. Wesley was able to sustain Pelagius's concern for moral accountability while retaining the priority of grace. Wesley's interpretation of the essence of the Christian life as responsive love was supported on the assumption that coerced love is a contradiction in terms."

—Dr. H. Ray Dunning, *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology*



## THE MAIN IDEA

SAUL TEACHES OUR STUDENTS TO LIVE WITH INTEGRITY AND PATIENCE AS THEY WAIT ON GOD'S WILL.

Samuel is quick to set regulations to Saul's kingship—his last attempt to separate this from being about the people but instead being about God. He is trying to ensure that Saul's role is not up to him but is an agreement between himself and God's rule of Israel. This is important to Saul's story because it is this very agreement that causes Saul to lose his kingship. He doesn't trust in God but takes matters into his own hands several times.

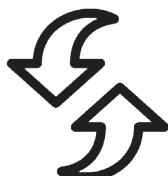
Later, in 1 Samuel 10:27-11:15, we see Saul no longer acting as a man hiding behind baggage but as a man who delivers Israel. Those who questioned him initially now support him as the king. Saul begins to grow in his confidence so much that he begins to trust his own human instincts. Saul loses favor with the Lord and ultimately loses his kingship. As we read earlier, Saul is not supposed to rule by himself but underneath the lordship of God. He denies this when he disobeys God's orders. We see Saul stray away from God completely and turn his motives toward fulfilling his own agendas.

However, we also see Saul turn to God for guidance. God doesn't answer Saul because Saul has broken the oath between them. Consequently, God remains silent. Saul cannot pick and choose when he turns to God, and God proves this to him during this encounter.

Saul again does what he wants during Israel's battle with the Amalekites. God tells Saul to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything that belongs to them. Instead, Saul saves their king and their best sheep and cattle. Saul places his own importance and longing over what God desires and commands. And then, when he's questioned, he lies! We see his integrity completely diminished. This conscious choice ends his rule as king.

Even here, instead of humbly acknowledging his mistakes, Saul instead justifies his actions. He says, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD'S command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them" (15:24). We can interpret this verse as Saul aiming to restore his relationship with Samuel rather than with the LORD. Saul just wants to get right with the prophet, rather than the prophet-maker.

### REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:



- Saul was arrogant to think he could disobey God and not be punished. Where are you arrogant in your life?
- Saul defied his oath with God. Where have you shown defiance in your life?

### REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

Do your students fully understand the importance of living a life of integrity? Where in our culture are students seeing examples of people who are living with integrity?

Saul started off in partnership with God and then started operating out of his own fears and personal agendas. Do you think this is common among students today?

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## LESSON OUTLINE



**Main Idea:** Saul teaches our students to live with integrity and patience as they wait on God's will.

**Resources:** Bibles, copies of handout, writing utensils, a plastic crown

**Connect to My Experience:**

Welcome and Prayer

Mock Election Activity

**Connect to the Word:** Read and Reflect on 1 Samuel 14:24-47

**Connect to My Life and the World:** Remembering God's Faithfulness

**Closing:** Prayer



## CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

**Student Goal:** Youth will understand the nature of political decisions and the importance of being a person of integrity.

Welcome your students and open in prayer.

### MOCK ELECTION ACTIVITY

Host a mock election. Ask for a few volunteers to be candidates. Give them just a few minutes to write a speech on why they should be king or queen of the group. Have students vote. Announce the winner and crown them with a plastic crown.

**ASK:** Why did you vote for the winning candidate?

Give the winning candidate a list of jobs they will be responsible for now that they are king or queen. Make them difficult. Here are some examples:

1. They are to come two hours early every week and set up and clean the youth room.
2. They must promise to fight to the death if necessary to protect God's people of the youth group.
3. They must pray four times a day, lifting all the problems of the day to God.
4. They must live in honor of the Ten Commandments and exemplify Christ in everything they do, which means they must never fight with their parents, siblings, or friends.

**ASK:** Do you think it would be difficult to uphold these rules for one full year?

Do you think over time, you may be tempted to make up a few rules of your own or to bend these just slightly?

### Saul for Office

Kings didn't have to run for office, but if they did, what would Saul's campaign have looked like? Create campaign posters to sell Saul as king.



## CONNECT TO THE WORD

**Student Goal:** Youth will understand the story of Saul and his weaknesses so that they might be able to discover their own weaknesses.

**READ** 1 Samuel 14:24-47.

**SAY:** Saul started off with a changed heart. According to 1 Samuel 10:9, "As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day." Samuel had put guidelines in place shortly after God chose Saul to be king so everyone would know that Saul shared his throne with God. However, Saul had a hard time following God's orders. Over time, he became angry and vengeful. He made up his own rules, and eventually, God bailed on him.

Saul wanted to partner with God, but when he felt anxious or thought God wasn't working fast enough, he decided to act on his own. It wasn't so much that he ignored God; he just kind of forgot about him. He let his paranoia and anxiety take control of him.

**READ** 1 Samuel 14:37 again: "So Saul asked God, 'Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel's hand?' But God did not answer him that day."

**SAY:** Here we see Saul seeking guidance from God, but he has already defied God, and God doesn't answer him. When Saul doesn't hear from God, he acts again out of his own anger.

**ASK:** How many times have you turned your back on God but then asked him to help you when you felt vulnerable?

How do you think God feels when we do that?

**SAY:** So often we take matters into our own hands, grow impatient with waiting on God, or just give up. Then we turn around and say something like, "God is never with me," or, "I don't feel like God is here because he never helps me when I ask."

**ASK:** Do these phrases sound familiar?

What's wrong with this kind of relationship with God?

**SAY:** When we do this, we aren't acting in faith that God will do what is best for us. Then we blame him. We get angry and act on our own accord.

**ASK:** How many of you get angry when you don't get your way and then lash out at God?

Share some examples of instances when you have behaved like Saul. Ask for a few volunteers to share their own experiences if they would like.



### Facilitator Note:

Make sure to steer away from American political debates if they come up. Try to focus your students' attention on the text itself.

### Further Explanation

Saul is an example of what *not* to do in our relationship with God. We need to discern which passages of Scripture are there to show us examples of failure.

### Isaiah 6:5

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

## Remembrance

Remembrance is a theme that fills the pages of the Old Testament. God reminds us to remember him. This implies that we are a forgetful people who need to be disciplined in the art of remembrance. Always practice disciplines that foster remembrance. Remembering God gives us life.



## CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

**Student Goal: Youth will understand the importance of being in partnership with God every day.**

**SAY:** Saul was supposed to be in a partnership with God.

**ASK:** What if we treated every day as an opportunity to partner with God?

Have students take out their phones and open their calendar apps.

**SAY:** God wants to be with us in every aspect of our day. Sometimes we miss experiencing God because we are not anticipating his presence in our lives. He is always there, interested in every part of our lives. Saul missed this part.

This week, we are going to spend some time waiting on God. Think about each day of your week. Let's begin each day reviewing the events of our day. Ask God to be in partnership with you. At the end of each day, review your calendar again, this time reflecting on where God was with you during the day.

**ASK:** Think about yesterday. Where did you see God in your life?

Distribute this week's student handout. If you have time, ask the students to spend some time reflecting on the lesson. Give them five to ten minutes to fill in their answers before you close. If you don't have time, ask them to take the handout home with them and spend some time in reflection this week.

### CREATIVE OPTION: PARTNERSHIP

Ask your students to write down three ways in which they can partner with God this week. Pass out writing utensils and paper to each student. Ask them to write at the top:

*This week I will partner with God by:*

If they're having a hard time coming up with ideas, feel free to help them out.

### CREATIVE OPTION: GOD'S WILL

Share with the group that although we may know God's will for all people, we still may ask "How do I know God's will for a specific decision in my life?"

**Seek the Scripture.** Does the Bible give clear direction on the matter?

**Seek God through Prayer.** Is God speaking and leading you in a direction?

**Seek godly counsel.** What is the perspective of mature Christians who may have walked this path before?



### CLOSING

Close in prayer, asking God to help your students live for him and fully surrender to his will.