

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



Year 3: Session 1 – Getting to Know Samuel the Prophet

Class 2: 1 Samuel 8:1-21 – Israel wants a king

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Demonstrate how our peers can affect how we make decisions (sometimes considered as peer pressure, this is more like *social proof*: If you look around and see others doing what you are doing or want to do, then you have “social proof” that it is ok to do such things)
- Decisions based on what others are doing can cause us to make a choice without understanding the consequences that come with that choice; this is what the Israelites do in this lesson’s story.
- Like Samuel, it is a best practice to turn to God when coming to a decision instead of blindly going along with social proof.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Movie clip (on rfour.org website)
2. Devices to show movie clip
3. Handout with timeline on it (or a way to digitally show the timeline to the whole class via TV screen or projector)
4. Quart-sized glass jar
5. Large size bag of M&Ms to put in the glass jar (plain is better than peanut/peanut butter cuz they are harder to count when in a jar and because of food allergy concerns)
6. Know the number of m&ms in the jar. (You can guesstimate, but knowing exact is better: Average number of M&Ms in a large bag is around 500 pieces)

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- Here’s the opening question for today’s class. One of the teachers will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, the teacher will answer first.
- Once the teacher answers the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.

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- Here's this week's question: What do you do when things don't go the way you want them to go?

INTRODUCE Movie Clip

- The following video clip is from the movie *Up* and shows a series of unintended (and some imagined) consequences
- The clip starts with a house that's flying due to a whole bunch of balloons being attached to it. But there's a hidden passenger. Let's see what happens.

WATCH Movie Clip

ASK

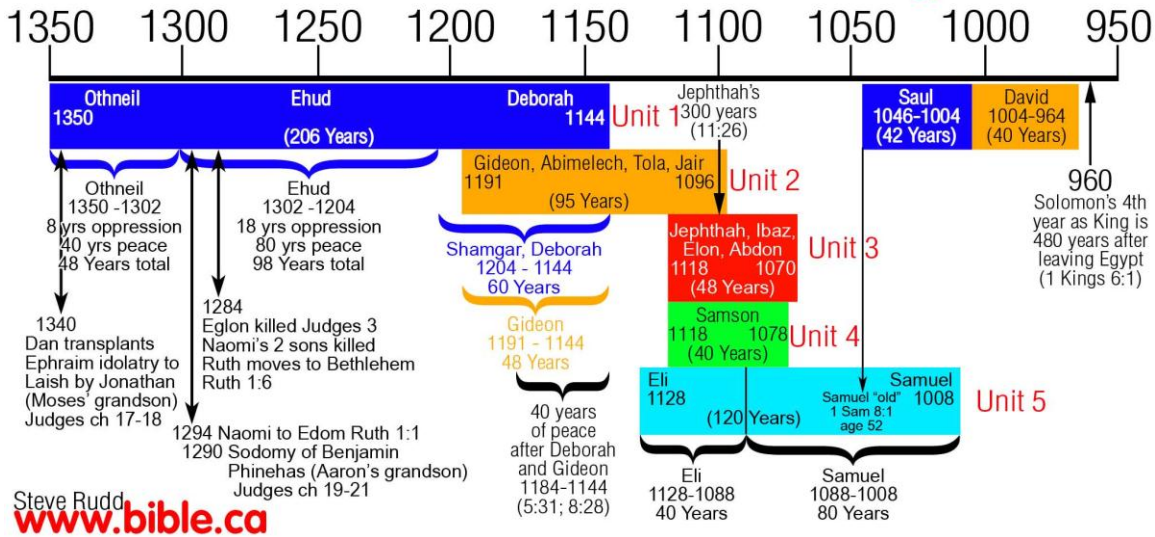
- Do you think the boy thought he'd end up in a flying house?
- What was a consequence of letting the boy inside? (incessant talking; messing with the steering)
- And what does the old man think might happen if he tried to "drop" the boy off? (That he'd accidentally drop the boy all the way down)
- And so, does the old man decide to go with that plan of "dropping" the boy off? (No, he says "Well, that won't work")

TRANSITION to Scripture Reading (this section is meant to go quickly)

- Last class, we were introduced to the prophet Samuel, when he was a child.
- He had a new experience in last class' story: He heard God.
- We discussed some things about communication in general and how those pieces of communication are true for us when we are communicating with God as well:
 - It takes practice and familiarity to hear God well
 - It takes other people and community to help us hear God well
 - It takes silence and few distractions to help us hear God well
- Last class, we also mentioned that Samuel lived after the Israelites were in captivity in Egypt and before they had any kings. Here's one possible timeline (from <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-date-chronology-of-judges-1350-1004bc.jpg>) :

Chronology of Judges Timeline

The five Indivisible Units of Chronology



- Samuel is a pretty significant person because he's the transition from judges to kings. When Samuel gets older, he anoints (i.e. chooses with God's blessing) the very first king of Israel, King Saul. Later on, he also anoints the second king of Israel, King David.
- In today's story, we learn why Samuel chooses/anoints the first King of Israel.
- Let's see what happened:

READ 1 Samuel 8:1-21 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

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 Beer-sheba. **3** Yet his sons did not follow 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, "You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations." **6** But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the Lord, **7** and the Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to 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** Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. **9** Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." **10** So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. **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 courtiers. **15** He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. **16** He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. **17** He will take one-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." **19** But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, "No! but we are

determined to have a king over us, **20** so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles." **21** When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. **22** The Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and set a king over them." Samuel then said to the people of Israel, "Each of you return home."

ASK (Answers are in parenthesis)

1. In general what happened in the story? (The Israelites wanted a king and God told Samuel, "OK, but warn them what they are asking for." So Samuel did and the people did not change their minds.)
2. In verse 5, why did the people say they wanted a king? (because Samuel was old and his sons were not like him)
3. What did Samuel's sons do? (verse 3 – take bribes and perverted justice)
4. Why do the Israelites say they want a king? (verse 5 – peer pressure/social proof! because that's what the other nations have...kings!)
5. What is Samuel's response to this request? (v 6 he is displeased)
6. Any thoughts about why he might be displeased? (later on God uses the word, "rejected" and that never feels good, to be rejected. Also, Samuel probably knows this is not the better way for the people, but somehow helped contribute to it due to his sons' behavior)
7. So what does Samuel do in his displeasure and rejection? (v6 He talks to God.)
8. What does God say in vv. 7-9? (A number of things. 1. God shares in Samuel's displeasure, tells Samuel they are rejecting me and by rejecting me, they are rejecting you. 2. Listen to them (which means do what they say), 3. But warn them of what will happen if they do what they are suggesting)
9. Do the people heed the warning from God through Samuel? (Maybe, but not enough to change their minds. They want a king!)

TELL

- Israelites want a king; partly because they are not a country, yet. Maybe more like a teenager country – looking for an identity. So in today's story, they want to try on the identity of the surrounding countries...by having a king. A sense of peer pressure and social proof at work here: The world says that the way to be a country is to have a king.
- The Israelites' demand for a king bothers Samuel, but instead of lashing out or making his own choices, Samuel turns to God. Samuel goes to God in prayer, and in that prayer, Samuel is both comforted by God (God takes SOME of the sting away by telling Samuel, "They are rejecting me and because of me, they are rejecting you." And then, God helps Samuel to see what to do next.)
- What's disappointing for God (and Samuel) in this story is that the Israelites were chosen, starting with Abraham, to be this people who were to live and illustrate to the rest of the world how living God's way was the better way for everyone to live. INSTEAD, what we see in this story is just the opposite. We see the chosen people say, "We don't want to live God's way, we want to live like everyone else."
- So what we see the Israelites doing here is making their own decisions, but without any understanding of the consequences that will follow.
- So, despite the disappointment, God tells Samuel to give the Israelites a warning, to better explain to the people the consequences of what they are choosing. Basically, God wants them to think like the old man did in the movie clip we just watched. God and Samuel want the Israelites to imagine what might go wrong.
- But, unlike the old man in UP, the Israelites don't change their plan.
- And the reason why seems to be because of peer pressure/social proof. The Israelites REALLY want to be like other countries.

- Sometimes, when we're making a decision, what others are doing/thinking can interfere with our ability to make a clear decision.
- To demonstrate one way that the thinking of others can affect our own sense of how to proceed, let's do the following activity.

EXPLAIN "COUNTING M&Ms" ACTIVITY

- First, everyone get a piece of paper and a writing utensil.
- Next, notice this quart-sized glass jar with M&Ms in it.
- In a moment, you will write down your guess as to how many M&Ms are in it.
- Then, I will match you with a partner.
- You and your partner will then have to make a guess – and you **have to agree** on one number. Which means you and your partner will write down the same number for your second guess.
- Once you do that, then I will pair you in groups of 3 and then 4 and so on until all of us, as one group, we all have to decide on one number.
- Each time you are in a new group, that group must all agree to one and only one number as their next guess.
- Afterwards, we will all make/write down one last **individual** guess
- Any questions?

DO "Counting M&Ms" ACTIVITY

ASK/TELL

- First: Here's the actual number of M&Ms in the jar (give number).
- Circle the number that was the closest.
- Now, how many of you were closest when you guessed by yourselves at the start? With another person? With a group of 2, 3, etc?
- Which was closer, your first individual guess or your last?
- In which group was it easiest to make your decision? Why?
- How easy was it to make your opinion known as the groups continued to get larger?
- Did your second individual guess change from your first individual guess? Why?
- Are group decisions always the best decision for every person in the group? Based on the results of your guesses, why or why not?
- Today, we saw how making decisions can be very complicated. And, how unexpected results can occur because of them, whether we're trying to count M&Ms, flying a house or wanting a king.
- In the scripture story, what we see Samuel do, though, is a good reminder of what to include in our decision-making process: Ask God what to do next and listening for a response.

CLOSING PRAYER