

# Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

**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.
- Highlight how Samuel turns to God when coming to a decision instead of blindly going along with social proof.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Up*)
2. Handout with timeline on it (or a way to digitally show the timeline to the whole class via TV screen or projector)
3. Quart-sized glass jar
4. 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)
5. 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.
- 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.

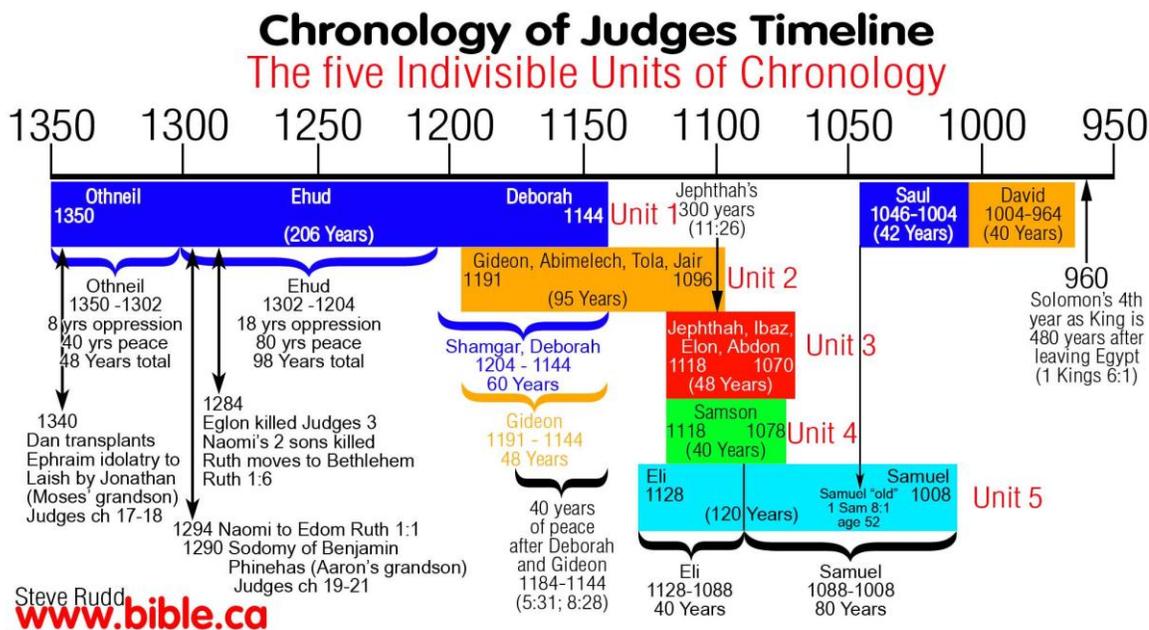
## WATCH Movie Clip

### ASK

- Do you think the boy thought he'd end up in a flying house? (nope)
- What was a consequence for the man after 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)
- So... does the old man decide to go with his plan of "dropping" the boy off? (No, he says "Well, that won't work")

## TRANSITION to Scripture Reading

- 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
  - It takes silence and few distractions to help us hear God
- Last class, we also mentioned that Samuel lived about 300 years after the Israelites left Egypt and before the Israelites 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>) :



- 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.
- Today's story, is about why Samuel chooses/anoints the first King of Israel.

**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. Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story?
2. 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.)
3. In verse 5, why did the people say they wanted a king? (because Samuel was old and his sons were not like him)
4. What did Samuel's sons do? (verse 3 – take bribes and perverted justice)
5. Why do the Israelites say they want a king? (verse 5 – peer pressure/social proof! because that's what the other nations have...kings!)
6. What is Samuel's response to this request? (verse 6: he is displeased)
7. Any thoughts about why Samuel 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 that he helped contribute to the decision due to his sons' behavior)
8. So what does Samuel do in his displeasure and rejection? (v6 He talks to God.)

9. 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)
10. 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.
- So in today's story, they want to try what other countries are doing....by having a king.
- This is peer pressure and social proof at work here: The world says that the way to be a country is to have a king and the Israelites are starting to agree.
- What's disappointing for God (and Samuel) about the Israelites choice is that the Israelites were chosen, starting with Abraham, to be a people who were to live and show to the rest of the world how living God's way was the better way for everyone to live.
- Instead, what we see the Israelites choose 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, when the Israelites demand a king, it bothers Samuel (both because it is a rejection of him AND of God)
- But Samuel does something impressive. He doesn't just lash out *or* agree with the Israelites.
- Instead, 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 God helps Samuel see what the next thing is to do.
- That next thing God tells Samuel to do is to give the Israelites a warning, to better explain to the people the consequences of what they are choosing because they don't seem to be thinking about the consequences.
- Basically, God wants the Israelites to be like the old man 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 after they are told what will happen.
- And the main reason why seems to be because of peer pressure/social proof. The Israelites REALLY want to be like other countries.
- The Israelites are not unique in their decision-making, though.
- The effects of peer pressure/social proof can be a very strong influence on any person, even you and me, when we're having to make a decision.
- To help us think about one way other people can affect our decision-making, 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

- First: Here’s the actual number of M&Ms in the jar (give number).
- Now, circle the number that was the closest of your group and individual guesses.
- 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?
- So, based on the results of your guesses, do you think group decisions are always the best decision for every person in the group? Why or why not? (Note: Sometimes yes, sometimes no)

### TELL

- 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 picking the next leader of our country.
- In the scripture story, what we see Samuel do (check in with God when making a decision) is a good reminder of what to include in our decision-making process: To ask God what to do next and then listen for a response.
- Doing so might help to balance what we hear and see others doing.
- And, as we see with Samuel, God will also help us better understand why we’re feeling what we’re feeling about the situation – which is also a helpful thing when we’re making decisions.
- That’s the good news for today.

## CLOSING PRAYER