

lesson 1

Bible Basis:

1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22

Focus:

Rejecting God to follow the crowd is a bad idea.

Marching to a Different Beat

STEP 1 Connecting with God's Word

Following the Crowd: Students will play a game of tug-of-war and discuss how it is similar to peer pressure.

- ☒ A long rope, for a tug-of-war game
- ☒ Masking tape

STEP 2 Studying God's Word

Reading from 1 Samuel 8: Students will study 1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22 and learn about following the crowd.

- ☐ Bibles, pencils or pens
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ "From Kings to the King" time line from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

STEP 3 Interacting with God's Word

Demanding a King: Students will choose from activities about peer pressure.

- ☒ Strong magnet(s), keys, paper clips
- ☒ Other metal objects
- ☐ Construction paper, Bibles, scissors, tape, markers

STEP 4 Applying God's Word

Marching to a Different Beat: Students will participate in a rhythm activity and a craft activity to help them follow God.

- ☒ Two rhythm instruments or other suitable objects
- ☒ Craft supplies
- ☐ "Higher Ground" review game from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Memory Verse

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

—Proverbs 3:5-6

Understanding the Bible

Imagine losing your position to someone less qualified than yourself. Now imagine that the people who fired you were your friends—or even your own children. That's what the Israelites did to the Lord when they demanded a human king.

After Israel had entered and conquered most of the land promised them by God through Abraham, they settled down and began the task of living life and raising families. It didn't take long, however, for the Israelites to become seduced by the culture, religion, and government of their neighbors.

The Israelites had been under a system of government known as a theocracy. God was their King who spoke through His prophets and priests. During the time of the judges (for example, Samson, Gideon, and Deborah), God carried out judgment and spiritual restoration through these political spirit-clothed warriors. The judges, however, failed to unify the nation which was growing increasingly restless for a human king. The Book of Judges describes the chaos of this time; the last verse of the book sums up the problem: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judg. 21:25).

Samuel, the last godly judge, became a bridge between that era and Israel's kings. As a prophet and priest, he heard from God and acted on God's behalf in anointing Israel's first king, Saul.

Israel gave three reasons for wanting a

—continued on next page

☒ indicates items you will need to prepare before class

Understanding the Bible —cont'd

king: (1) Samuel was old and his sons were not fit to rule; (2) all the other nations had kings; (3) a king would lead Israel in battles. Even though God saw the people's desire for a human king as a rejection of His lordship over them, God allowed the people's request.

Classroom Tips

To make your Sunday school classroom a place youth will remember as warm and accepting, take time to get to know your students. Find out what they like to do in their spare time and what activities they are involved in. Find at least one positive thing about each of your youth. Show patience and compassion, and take an interest in what's going on in their lives.

Teacher Devo

But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? Galatians 4:9 (Also read Psalm 34:4-10.)

Life in the Spirit is freedom. So why do we sometimes go back to life in the flesh?

The difference between the two ways of living out our Christian life is a matter of identity. We know God and He knows us! He sets us free from the slavery of sin and from being conformed to this world by means of a relationship. Once we have tasted of the unconditional love of God, the taste of sin seems bitter. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Thank Him for the sweetness of His love.

When Teaching the Bible to Middle Schoolers . . .

Perhaps there's no lesson more relevant to middle schoolers than one dealing with the pressure to conform. Early adolescence is a battlefield for the hearts and souls of these vulnerable students. They are beginning to judge their world by what looks good, feels right, and works! Our culture delights their senses with truckloads of stimuli. Your students are pulled from developing inner strength and dependence on God to relying on externals such as looks, material possessions, performance, and popularity.

The greatest gift a teacher of middle schoolers can give to his or her class is an atmosphere where acceptance, security, and authenticity are fostered. In school and other settings these young people are often emotionally "beat up" and find it hard to live up to the world's standards of beauty and performance. Long after your lessons are taught, your students will remember how you treated them rather than what you taught them.

STEP 1

Connecting with God's Word

Lesson Focus:

Rejecting God to follow the crowd is a bad idea.

Before Class Option

Place a map of the world on the wall or bulletin board. When students arrive have them take a pushpin or adhesive dot and place it on the location of their farthest trip away from home.

LES. 1

Students will go through the motions of tug-of-war and discuss how it is similar to peer pressure.

Materials:

- ☐ A rope, long enough for tug-of-war
- ☐ Masking tape

In this step you'll be comparing peer pressure to a game of tug-of-war. The teams will be slightly unbalanced, so expect a certain amount of complaining. Acknowledge during the discussion time that peer pressure is like that—we feel outnumbered and powerless—which is one reason peer pressure is so powerful.

Divide your class into two slightly uneven teams for a game of tug-of-war. Have each team grab hold of one end of the rope. Use masking tape to mark a line on the floor in the middle of the two teams. When everyone is ready, give the signal to pull. The first team to pull the other team across the line on the floor wins. Supervise this activity closely. It is for demonstration purposes only; not to be played as a competitive game for safety reasons.

Have students return to their seats and discuss these questions.

- ▶ **How did it feel to be pulled across the line by the other group?** (*Possible answers may include: we tried to resist, but they pulled harder; they were stronger than us; there were more of them than us; we were outnumbered; it wasn't fair.*)
- ▶ **How is this like peer pressure?** (*The pull of the group is very strong. We can try to resist, but it's hard when we feel outnumbered.*)
- ▶ **Share, if you feel comfortable, about a time you struggled with peer pressure.** (*Encourage students to share their experiences with peer pressure. This may include pressure to dress a certain way, act a certain way, or own certain things. Students may feel pressured to do things like smoke, drink, be rude to members of the opposite sex, lie, cheat, steal, disrespect parents or teachers, etc.*)

In today's lesson we're going to see how the entire nation of Israel was pulled by the crowd around them. Let's find out what God thinks about rejecting Him to follow the crowd.



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STEP 2

Studying God's Word

Bible Basis:

1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22

Students will study 1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22 to see what God's Word says about following the crowd.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles, pencils or pens
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ "From Kings to the King" time line from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

In this step your students will study what God's Word has to say about rejecting Him to follow the crowd in the story of Israel's demand for a king.

Before class, cut the "From Kings to the King" time line in half and tape the pieces side by side. Display the time line where your students can see it. You'll be using this time line for this entire quarter.



Distribute *The Rock* and have your students open to Today's Scripture on page 5.

Until this time, Israel had not had a king. Instead, God sent judges to rule them and lead them spiritually and militarily. The other nations around Israel had

kings, but God wanted Israel to have a special relationship with Him as their King.

Have the students read the passage silently to themselves first, then ask for volunteers to read it aloud. When students are done reading, have them pair up and complete the news bulletins on page 4 of *The Rock*. Answers are shown on the next page.

The Israelites Demand a King

WE WANT A KING-

Suppose you're watching TV one night when a news bulletin suddenly interrupts your favorite program. The announcer looks very serious as he reports a big event—the story in today's Scripture. But static suddenly interferes with the sound and you can hear only pieces of the broadcast.

Read 1 Samuel 8:4-10 and 19-22, and fill in the missing pieces of this news report:

NEWS BULLETIN

Good evening. In Israel today, a group of national leaders demanded that _____ appoint a _____ to rule the nation. A spokesman for the leaders gave two reasons for their request:

1. Judge Samuel is _____ and his sons _____.

2. _____.

Judge Samuel was unavailable for comment.

Later that week another news bulletin follows up the first one. Your TV is still on the blink. Fill in the missing phrases.

FOLLOW-UP NEWS BULLETIN

Good evening. Judge Samuel has returned from a week of summit meetings with God, bringing the people this answer: "You aren't rejecting Samuel, you are _____."

"And let me warn you—life will be rough with a king. He will demand your best crops as taxes." But the people of Israel have responded: _____.



To find out what God told the Israelites it would be like to have a king, have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 8:11-18.

- ▶ **What did Samuel tell the people that a king would do?** (*He told them that a king would subject the people to military service and require a portion of their land, produce, and livestock as taxes. He would take their sons and daughters to work for him and enslave the people.*)

Discuss the “Exclusive Interview” questions on page 5 of *The Rock* together as a class. Answers will vary; some suggestions are provided here.

1. Rejected. I've worked hard for them and been a good judge, following God's commands.

2. Demanding a human king is a rejection of God as our King. No human king will be as fair, patient, or holy as God. By demanding a king, Israel is rejecting God to be like the other nations.

3. The people just want to be like everybody else around them. The other nations have kings, so they want a king too.

Israel rejected God to be like the other nations, despite warnings about how demanding a king would be. Let's do some activities that show how rejecting God to follow the crowd is a bad idea.

LES. 1

NOW!

Bible Study

Now the news team has learned that Judge Samuel has agreed to grant the people's request. Israel will have a king.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Pretend you are Samuel. How would you answer these questions?

1. Judge Samuel, how did you feel when the people asked for a king? Why?
2. The people are right: your sons are unfit to run the nation. So what's wrong with the people wanting a king?
3. Why do you think the people didn't listen when you told them how rough having a king would be?

Today's Scripture
1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22

"So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."
 "But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."
 "Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king.
 "But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."
 "When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."
 Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."

Lesson 1


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STEP 3

Interacting with God's Word

Students will choose from activities that illustrate peer pressure and help them choose to follow God rather than the crowd.

Allow your students to choose from the following activities on peer pressure and work individually or in groups. If your class is small, you may want to prepare just one or two activities. "Sharks and Minnows" demonstrates the power of the crowd and helps your students actively practice avoiding its draw; "Crowns like Other Towns" explores the crowd around Israel and allows students to choose to follow God instead; and "Magnetic Attraction" explores some principles of peer pressure.

tip To reduce your explanation time, you may photocopy the Step 3 page in each lesson. Simply cut out the activity instructions and place them with appropriate supplies at your activity centers.

Sharks and Minnows

Play this game in a large open area or outdoors if you can. If you play indoors, be sure to clear a large area. Establish boundaries for the playing area; everybody who plays needs to stay within these boundaries throughout the game. Have everybody move to one side of the playing area, except for one person who represents the "crowd." This person stays in the middle. The "crowd" must call out, "Come on, be like me" which is the signal for everybody to run across to the other side of the field (or room). Anybody that the "crowd" tags must stay in the middle and become part of the "crowd." Play until everyone has been tagged by the "crowd."

Crowns Like Other Towns

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Construction paper
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Markers

Make crowns with the names of the other nations that Israel wanted to be like. Look up Joshua 12:7-24 to find a list of the nations Israel conquered. Make the biggest, most beautiful crown for God, the King of Israel.

Magnetic Attraction

- ☒ Strong magnet(s)
- ☒ Keys
- ☒ Paper clips
- ☒ Other metal objects

Use a strong magnet to pick up as many objects as you can. Notice that the magnet itself doesn't even have to touch an object—the pull on the other objects is enough to pick up more. How is this like peer pressure?

STEP 4

Applying God's Word

Lesson Focus:

Rejecting God to follow the crowd is a bad idea.

Alternate Method

If you cannot get any rhythm instruments, have students clap their hands, snap their fingers, or tap almost any two objects together.

Students will participate in a rhythm activity and a craft activity to help them follow God.

Materials:

- ☐ Two rhythm instruments or other suitable objects
- ☐ Craft supplies
- ☐ "Higher Ground" review game from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

In this step your students will personally apply what they've learned about peer pressure and commit to follow God instead.

Have everyone in your classroom line up in single file. If your classroom isn't big enough for a straight line, curl the line around in a circle or horseshoe. Ask for a volunteer to stand off by himself or herself but within view of the line of students. Tell the students in the line that you will beat a steady rhythm while they march in place and in unison.

Provide the student outside the circle with a rhythm instrument and have her create her own unique beat while the other students are marching in unison to the first beat. After a few minutes of this have the students sit down.

Most of us are comfortable following the beat of the crowd that marches in unison. However, God asks us to follow His rhythm no matter what everyone else is doing. Whose beat are you marching to?

Think about something you might be doing or thinking about doing that would cause you to set aside God's will for your life. In what area do you need to work on following God rather than the crowd?

Provide craft materials and give your students a few minutes to create a symbol of a drum, a crown, or the situation in which they commit to follow God rather than the crowd. Encourage your students to keep their symbols in a prominent place to remind them to follow God rather than the crowd this week.

Seal It!



Play the review game for Lesson 1 from "Higher Ground" in the *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. There is a review game for lessons 1-13 this quarter. After students have finished playing the game, allow your students a few moments for silent prayer. End the prayer time by asking God to provide strength for your students to follow Him rather than the crowd this week.



Remind your class to read the "Everyday Devotions" on page 8 of *The Rock* throughout the coming week.



Seeing God throughout the Week Talk with students about how they might follow God and reject the crowd this week.