



GOD REJECTED SAUL BECAUSE OF SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 SAMUEL 13:5-14 & 15:1-26

To obey God is better than sacrifice.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Saul doesn't wait for Samuel – After Samuel anointed Saul as king he gave Saul a step-by-step prophetic account of the coming week. Everything happened just as Samuel predicted. The last bit of information was that Saul was to go to Gilgal and wait there for the prophet who would offer a sacrifice to God when he arrived. Saul went to Gilgal. There the Israelite men were afraid and began to scatter because the Philistines were gathering an enormous army. Saul, impatient to wait any longer, foolishly offered the sacrifice to God. He disobeyed God and then offered the sacrifice in a perfunctory way - more as a token than genuine worship. When Samuel confronted him about performing the sacrifice Saul revealed his superficial attitude when he said, "I forced myself" to make the sacrifice, (1 Samuel 13:12). Saul was afraid that if he waited any longer for the prophet, he would lose his men. So he went ahead and did what he should not have done.

Samuel arrived and condemned Saul's actions – Samuel called Saul foolish and disobedient. Had Saul kept the command of the Lord, his kingdom would have been established forever. But now it will not continue. Instead, God would seek a man after His own heart. God wanted a king that would seek to please the Lord rather than himself. Even though Saul did not repent in response to Samuel's rebuke, God extended favor, allowed Saul to lead Israel to many victories, (1 Samuel 14:47-48).

Saul disobeyed God again – God sent Samuel again to give Saul a step-by-step battle plan against the Amalekites. Whenever God called His servant to battle and gave instructions, it was important to follow them exactly. The instructions were simple: strike Amalek and destroy everyone, including, the animals.

Saul defeated the Amalekites but he and the people spared Agag their king and the best of the sheep, oxen, calves and lambs, and all that was good (see 1 Samuel 15:9). They only destroyed what was despised and worthless. Saul went even further and set up a monument to himself just like the other heathen kings (1 Samuel 15:12).

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The Lord rejected Saul – God spoke to Samuel and informed him that Saul had “turned back from following me” (1 Samuel 15:11). In spite of his clear disobedience, Saul objected and claimed he obeyed the Lord (see 1 Samuel 15:13). Even after Samuel reprimanded him, Saul replied, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord” (1 Samuel 15:20).

Samuel then brought a scathing rebuke to Saul saying, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). This rebuke was a reference to Saul’s first mistake in offering the peace offering instead of waiting for Samuel. Samuel finished by saying, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.” After that day, Samuel did not see Saul again until the day Saul died, (1 Samuel 15:35).

Where is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today’s lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God’s greater plan of redemption.

As a king, Saul failed. One day God would anoint another man to be king who would not fail. Even when it was difficult, Jesus (the greatest king) obeyed God. King Jesus faced the difficult task God had given him. He obeyed to the point of death, even death on a cross (see Acts 13:22-23).

When faced with the cross, Jesus prayed to His father in heaven saying, “...not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42). In contrast, Saul placed his own will above God’s. As a result of Jesus’ obedience, we have salvation through His sacrificial death.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Malachi 3:1-2

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the one who will come as the refiner to judge us according to what we have done. Malachi and Peter both prophesied the same events.

Questions for reflection:

- Compare Malachi 3:2-3 with 2 Peter 3:10-11. How are they similar? (They are both speaking of a final day of judgment.)
- In light of the fact that Jesus is coming back in judgment on that final day, how should we live? (According to 2 Peter 3:11, we ought to live holy and godly lives.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS

Supplies

- inexpensive, new flashlight
- two types of batteries for the flashlight (one the correct size and one the incorrect size)

Play out the following skit with another teacher. Feel free to ad lib.

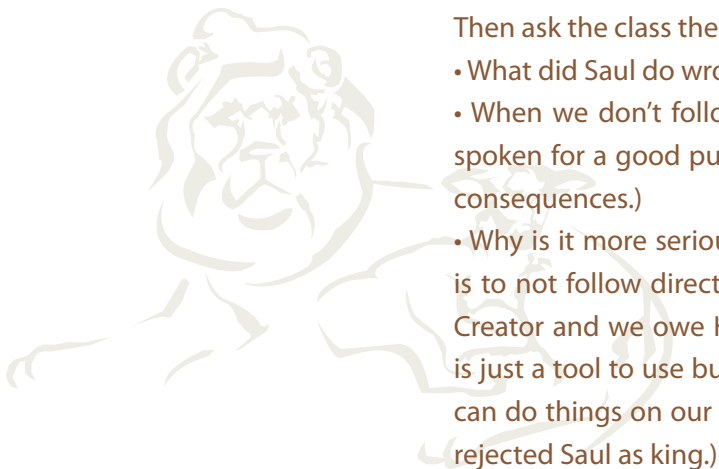
Skit – One teacher (the camper) comes in excited about a camping trip he is going on and announces that he has a new flashlight and that he bought brand new batteries. The second teacher reminds him to read the instructions because he has a history of messing things up. The camper replies that he has no need of reading the directions because it is only a flashlight not something complicated like a tent. He proceeds to put the wrong batteries in (too small) and then tries to get the flashlight to work. He blames everything else but himself. Finally he accepts the other teacher's help. The other teacher figures out that he used the wrong batteries.

The teacher reads the instructions and then brings the correct batteries to the camper. He offers to install the batteries but the camper refuses and then puts them in backwards so the flashlight won't light. Again he blames everything else but himself. Finally he reads the instructions and gets it right. In the end he looks to the class and says, "Can you believe this guy, directions, who needs directions? It's only a flashlight."

Read the account of Saul's disobedience in 1 Samuel 15:1–24.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What did Saul do wrong? (Saul didn't follow the directions of the prophet.)
- When we don't follow the directions what happens? (Directions are written or spoken for a good purpose. If we don't follow them we will usually run into bad consequences.)
- Why is it more serious to not follow God's instructions (commandments) than it is to not follow directions for how to install batteries in a flashlight? (God is our Creator and we owe Him our devotion. We are bound by His Word. A flashlight is just a tool to use but if we don't follow God's commands, we are saying that we can do things on our own without God. Doing things his own way was why God rejected Saul as king.)



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OBEYING ON THE OUTSIDE

Supplies

- Lego® bricks
- broom
- microphone
- small amplification system

This skit is designed to help the children understand that mere obedience is not enough. God wants our attitudes to honor Him as well.

Mom: (Calling to her son.) "John."

John: (John is playing with his blocks, building a tower and looking intent. Every time the voice speaks John makes facial expressions to match.)

Voice: (The voice is John's thoughts verbalized. This should be read by a narrator off stage.) "Oh, I wanted to finish this castle."

Mom: "John, I need you."

Voice: "Okay, I hear you, I just need to finish ..."

Mom: (going over to John.) "John, didn't you hear me calling you?"

John: "I guess I was wrapped up in what I was doing." (John looks down at his castle.)

Voice: "I think I will build a drawbridge next."

Mom: "I need you to pick up your things and sweep the floor."

John: "Can I just finish my castle?"

Voice: "She never lets me finish."

Mom: "No, sweetheart, we have guests coming over for dinner." (Mom leaves for a moment.)

John: "Okay." (John goes over to his castle and starts breaking it apart and throwing it into the block box.)

Voice: "I never get to finish. It was a dumb castle anyway. Sweep the floor. Why do I always have to be the one to sweep the floor?"

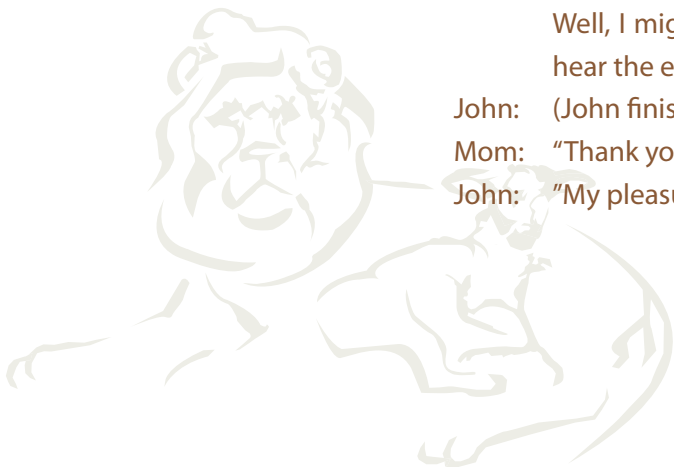
John: (Picks up broom and starts sweeping.)

Voice: "Fine, I'll sweep the floor; I just won't get any time to play at all. I could be out playing. I could be riding my bike. I could be building castles or even doing my homework, but no, I've got to be sweeping the floor. Figures! Well, I might as well force myself to finish the whole floor 'cause I'll never hear the end of it if I don't sweep it all."

John: (John finishes sweeping the floor and puts the broom away.)

Mom: "Thank you, John."

John: "My pleasure."



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Then ask the class the following questions:

- Did John do what he was told to do? (Yes, John did what he was told to do, though he was a bit slow in responding.)
- Did John obey on the inside? (No, John did not obey on the inside. All the time he was doing what he was told on the outside, John was rebelling against his mother on the inside.)
- Did John obey his mother? (No, even though John outwardly obeyed, inwardly he was disrespecting his mother.)
- How was John's half-hearted obedience like Saul's? (Saul obeyed God on the outside for the most part but his heart was not given to God. Even when Saul performed the sacrifice his heart was not doing it in worship. In 1 Samuel 13:12 Saul used the same words as John: I forced myself.)



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TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

Supplies:

- small radio with headphones
- CD player with worship music

This is to help the children apply Samuel's rebuke of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

This skit can be done ad lib. The scene is a church service during worship. The person in the skit doesn't want to miss the pre-game show to a big football game (you name the local team and rival). He hides the earphone in his collar so that no one will see him listening to the game. He clues the class in as though they are co-conspirators then he goes on to worship the Lord but in the middle of one song he clues the class in again saying in a whisper so as not to disturb worship, "The game is about to start." Then in the middle of the song he starts yelling "Go! Go! Go! Thirty! Twenty! Ten! Touchdown!" As soon as he realizes he has dropped character he returns to worshipping.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What was wrong with the man in the skit? (He was trying to listen to a football game while worshipping. Worshipping God is not just being present at a worship service or even singing. Worshipping God is something we do in our heart. We worship God when we obey His word, not just when we are singing.)
- How is the man in the skit like Saul? (When Saul offered the sacrifice and when Saul attacked the Amalekites, his heart was not worshipping God. Saul was thinking of himself. First, he was afraid of the Philistines and second he was afraid to tell the people to destroy all the animals. The man in the skit may have been raising his hands in worship but his heart was thinking of himself and his desire to hear the football game.)
- What about our hearts? How should we posture ourselves before God? (We should obey God and give Him our undivided attention. We can't think that by simply going to church or lifting our hands in worship that we are worshipping God. God is interested in what is going on in our hearts.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

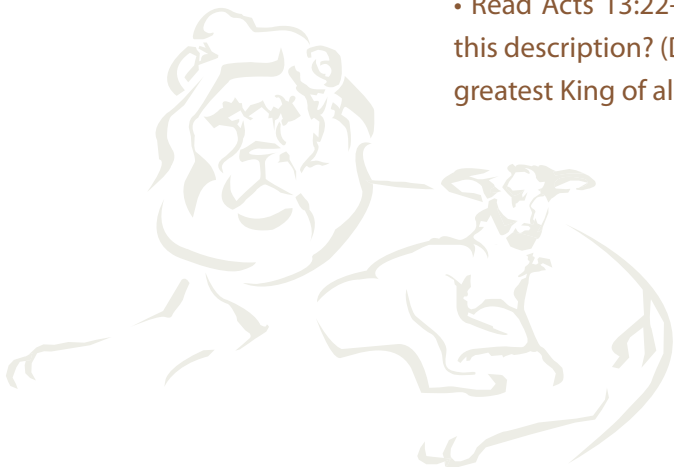
IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of Saul with sheep all around him.

FOR OLDER GRADES

Read through the instructions for a peace or fellowship offering from Leviticus 7:11-15. Ask the class to describe the purpose for bringing an offering like this to the Lord. Then read 1 Samuel 13:1-13. Ask the class the following questions:

- Why was Samuel so upset with Saul for offering the peace offering? (Samuel was upset with Saul because he had acted foolishly and did not keep the Lord's command. Samuel knew that Saul would now lose his kingdom.)
- How is Saul different from the man God wants to have in office as king? (God wants a man after His own heart. Saul was clearly not the man.)
- Read Acts 13:22-23. Who was the man whom God would appoint and who fit this description? (David was the one, and through David's lineage God brought the greatest King of all, Jesus.)



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Peace Offering – The peace offering is sometimes called the fellowship offering. It is an offering brought to the Lord out of thanks for what He has done, see Leviticus 7:11-15. This offering may come along with a vow made to the Lord or simply as an expression of thanks. For Saul to “force himself” to make a peace offering to the Lord shows his disregard and lack of affection for the Lord.

