

WHAT PART OF "YES LORD!" DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

by Orlan Koehn

KEY VERSE:

And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." I Samuel 15:22.

FAITH STORY:

I Samuel 15

FAITH FOCUS:

By the Lord's instruction through the prophet Samuel, Saul is commanded to attack the Amalakites and destroy every person and animal without exception. Saul and his men attack and rout the Amalakites, but take King Agog alive and spare the best sheep and cattle. The Lord is displeased with Saul's disobedience and sends the prophet Samuel to confront Saul. In the meantime, after the battle, Saul went to Carmel, where Saul had set up a monument to himself, apparently to gloat over himself in his victory over the Amalakites. Samuel catches up with Saul there and when confronted by Samuel, Saul dishonestly claims to have followed the Lord's instruction. Upon further questioning, Saul attempts to deflect any responsibility by saying the soldiers kept back the best sheep and cattle for sacrificing to the Lord. Samuel again attempts to hold Saul accountable by asking, "Does the Lord delight in sacrifice, as much as obedience?" Saul finally admits that he was afraid of the people, therefore, he allowed spoils of the war to be retained. Saul asks for forgiveness, and pleads with Samuel to return with him so they can worship the Lord and Saul may be honored before the elders and the people. Samuel informs Saul that God has replaced him as King with another one who is better, King David.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand the importance of obedience in his or her relationship with God.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

Have students identify an area of their lives in which God is calling them to obey.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Copies of the Pop Quiz and pencils for each student
- 2 A container such as a bucket or pot for pennies to be tossed into.
- 3 20 pennies and one nickel for each student.
- 4 Play Doh, large colorful paperclips.
- 5 Bibles for each student

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–7 minutes)

Hand out the pop quiz and ask students to find places in the room where they won't watch each other take the quiz. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate how well students follow instructions. (The first instruction is to read the quiz before completing, and the last item in the quiz tells students to answer only the even-numbered questions.)

CONNECT: (5–7 minutes)

Reflect with the class on the results of the quiz exercise. Some possible questions are:

- 1 If you answered all of the questions, how did you feel when you realized you hadn't followed the instructions?
- 2 If you answered the even-numbered questions, what reward did you get for following the instructions?

Say: *Rules and instructions are a part of our lives, whether we like them or not. Today we will look at a guy who had a difficult time following instructions and obeying commands. This guy was Saul, the King, who started out well, but something went wrong. Let's see what happened.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15 minutes)

Read through I Samuel 15 with the class, pausing to discuss the questions after each section:

Read verses 1-3. Question: What were God's instructions to Saul?

Read 4-9. Questions: Who did Saul kill? Who did Saul let live and why?

Read 10-15. Questions: Who is Samuel? What was Saul doing at Carmel? Why do you think Saul says what he does in verse 13. (Is this a guy covering up or what?) Note Samuel's reply in verse 14—he has a sense of humor! What does Saul say in verse 15 to try to continue the cover-up?

Read 16-21 Summarize what happens in these verses.

Read 22-23 Put these verses in your own words.

Read 24-31: What is Saul's attitude in these verses? What is God's attitude toward Saul, as portrayed by Samuel?

Read 32-35 How does this story end? What was the consequence of Saul's disobedience?

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

"Penny for Your Thoughts" (The purpose of this activity is to discuss the points from the Bible story and apply them to the students' lives.) Hand out 20 pennies and 1 nickel to each student, and place the container in the middle of the group. If possible, seat the group in a circle around the container. Explain that you will be asking questions and going around the circle, giving students a chance to respond in one of the following ways:

- 1 Throw one penny into the bucket and respond with a short comment or answer.
- 2 Throw in 2 pennies (2 cents worth) and respond with a longer, more thoughtful answer.

- 3 Students may “four-fit” answering the question by tossing in his or her nickel and receiving one penny in return.

Note: students are not allowed to look in their Bibles for the answers.

Questions:

- 1 What does Saul do that he has been commanded not to do? (v. 9)
- 2 What is Saul doing when Samuel goes searching for him? (v. 12)
- 3 What is implied by “small in your own eyes”? (v. 17)
- 4 What is the main thing God desired from Saul?
- 5 How do you think Saul felt when confronted by Samuel?
- 6 What do you think God should have done with Saul when he repented?
- 7 Was it fair for God to take Saul’s kingship away?
- 8 Tell us about a time when you or someone you know disobeyed a rule.
- 9 How would you describe a person who is ‘large in his or her own eyes’? Give an example.
- 10 How would you describe a person who is “small in his or her own eyes.” Give an example.
- 11 Does “being large or small in your own eyes” affect your ability to obey rules? Why or why not?
- 12 Give an example of a hard rule to follow that is human-made. (Teacher, you could ask this question a number of times.)
- 13 Give an example of a hard rule to follow that comes from God. (Teacher, you could ask this question a number of times.)
- 14 Why does God want our obedience? What’s in it for God?
- 15 What’s in it for us if we obey God?

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Tell students to use the Play Doh and the large paperclips to build a “monument of themselves” that represents an area of their life where their high self interests might be hindering their obedience to God. For example, if basketball is more important than youth group or spending time with God, they could shape a ball. Ask students to hold their monuments as you close with the following prayer:

God, sometimes we are like Saul. We don’t want to listen to you, we have our own self-interests that get in the way of our obedience to you, and when we are challenged, we make excuses. Forgive us. Help us to know that you are a God of grace and forgiveness, but also a God of justice and consequences. Walk with us as we experience all of those characteristics of you in our lives. Amen.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

In response to Israel’s insistent request for a king, God chose Saul as Israel’s first king. The story of Saul begins in I Samuel 9 with reference to his parentage. His father, Kish, was a man

of good standing from the clan of Benjamin. Saul is identified as an impressive young man, without equal among the Israelites, a head taller than any other man.

When Samuel, the aging judge of Israel, comes to anoint Saul as God's choice for King, Saul protests, in an attitude of humility, saying, "I am from the smallest tribe, and the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin. Again when Samuel attempts to present Saul as King to the Israelites, he is found hiding among the baggage. So, in a scene of humility and reluctance, Saul is declared God's choice for King over Israel. The people of Israel responded by shouting, "Long live the King!"

Early in Saul's reign, he displays his military prowess by successful battles against Israel's neighboring enemies. Prior to going into battle with the Philistines, Saul and his army were to wait for Samuel to come and offer sacrifices to the Lord. When Samuel's coming was delayed, Saul took it upon himself to offer the sacrifices, which was contrary to the command of the Lord. When Samuel arrived, he rebuked Saul and informed Saul that his kingship would be short lived as a result of his disobedience. From this account we see Saul's propensity towards impatience and disobedience concerning the Lord's commands. In I Samuel 15 (see summary of scripture passage) the Lord formally rejects Saul as King because of his outright disobedience in the battle with the Amalakites and informs him that some one better will replace him.

From this major disobedience forward we see Saul's life spiraling into other sinful behavior, such as lying to Samuel about his disobedience, attempting to justify it, blaming his soldiers for his disobedience, and self worship at a monument set up in his honor in Carmel. (Chapter 15)

The remainder of Saul's life seems to be a struggle with an insane jealousy of his successor to the throne. Not only is David the Lord's anointed choice for king; he is also the people's choice, especially among the women. (Chapter 18) Saul is determined to kill David or have him killed, but is unable to do so because of the Lord's anointing on David. Finally, when Saul is wounded in a battle with the Philistines, he ends his own life by falling on his sword. This is truly a sad ending for a man chosen by God to be king.

FUN POP-QUIZ • Read quiz before beginning

- 1 What is your favorite food? _____
- 2 What is your favorite flower? _____
- 3 Name your favorite subject. _____
- 4 How old is your dad? _____
- 5 What foreign car is mentioned in the Bible? _____
- 6 What is your favorite pair of shoes? _____
- 7 What do you like to do in your free time? _____
- 8 Describe your dream vacation. _____
- 9 Who in the Bible was constipated? _____
- 10 Who does the Bible say had no father? (Josh. 1:1) _____
- 11 Who was Menno Simons? _____
- 12 Where was Jesus born? _____
- 13 Name your favorite movie. _____
- 14 What is your favorite sport? _____
- 15 What is your state or province's motto? _____
- 16 How many times a week do you eat at fast food? _____
- 17 How many books do you read in a year? _____
- 18 Would you rather be an only child or one of ten? _____
- 19 Have you ever been bungee jumping? _____
- 20 Do you prefer skydiving alone or with a companion? _____
- 21 Would you tell a host the food is terrible and not eat it, or would you eat the food and pretend to like it? _____
- 22 Would you rather find someone's hair on your plate or see a cockroach on your food? _____
- 23 Would you rather lose your hearing or your eyesight? _____
- 24 Would you rather be known as a bad kisser or someone with bad breath? _____
- 25 Answer only the even-numbered questions on this quiz.