

1 Samuel 9:1-10 and 15-22; 10:1 and 15-22; 11:15

Aim of lesson

To show how the purpose of God is worked out in the everyday lives of his people.

Background study

Find a relief map of the area that Saul covered in search of the donkeys. Refer to information on the casting of lots.

Suggested outline of lesson

In order to make the children more curious and attentive throughout the narrative, begin with a positive statement such as: "Today the story is about a man who was going about his daily work, little realizing that he was being guided by God as part of his plan ...". Describe Saul, emphasizing his physical attributes and attractive character. Paint a picture of a very tall, powerfully-built, agreeable young man.

The donkey hunt

During the search for his father's asses, Saul showed himself to be hardworking, conscientious, obedient and considerate. There is no evidence that this fine young man was either vain or arrogant, despite his impressive appearance and wealthy family - we are told that Kish was a mighty man of power and it is likely that he was a breeder of donkeys. These animals were very valuable and were used for both farming and riding. In addition Kish had several servants and the one who accompanied Saul was obviously a very responsible member of the household, whom Saul respected and consulted. It was he who pointed out the proximity of the prophet and who suggested what gift they could give him.

Prince over Israel

Meanwhile, unbeknown to Saul and the servant, Samuel the prophet was already expecting their arrival and had in fact known of it for twenty-four hours. He had made preparations for welcoming the new arrivals and he was ready to meet the future king of Israel. Perhaps he could already imagine what this man would be like, since God had told him that he would be the people's champion, to lead them against the Philistines.

As Saul approached, God spoke to Samuel and identified the man for whom he had been waiting. Saul was completely unaware that his future was in God's hands. Describe how that, stage by stage, it gradually dawned on Saul that events were being controlled and that he had been selected for a special purpose. First there was the prophet's knowledge of, and assurance about, the safety of the asses; then the announcement of the honour to be bestowed on his family; he was welcomed as chief guest at a reception and served a special meal already prepared for him. Finally there was his audience with the great prophet, culminating in his anointing.

Point out Saul's humility throughout these events. His words were few and he seemed to submit to Samuel's authority and to the developing situation, without grasping the demands that would be made upon him. Upon his return home, when questioned about his meeting with Samuel, he said nothing of his remarkable experiences. Although he had some time to consider the implications of Samuel's declaration (10:1) before the matter became public, he was still unprepared to shoulder the responsibility when his name was announced.

Every decision is from the LORD

The method of selection - casting lots - was probably used many times by the Israelites. Explain to the children how this was done and why. They believed that this method ruled out human prejudice and allowed God to decide the outcome (Proverbs 16:33). Saul knew from the outset what the result would be, and the fact that he was selected was confirmation of God's word and of Samuel's God-given authority. The people were favourably impressed with the tall, strong, young man, and content with God's choice. They cheered him and shouted: "Long live the King".

The duties of a king

Samuel made a list of kingly duties, which he announced to the people, and then wrote a book, which he laid before the Lord. Saul was not left to cope with his new position alone. Samuel spelled out his responsibilities and advised him how to rule wisely. In writing this book, was Samuel perhaps following the guidance of Moses in Deuteronomy 17:18-19?

A time was arranged for the coronation, which was to take place in Gilgal. Describe the pomp and ceremony, the music and the colour of the occasion.

This was Israel's first crowning and thousands came to Gilgal to witness the event. It was both a happy and a solemn day - a day of rejoicing at achieving their longed for kingdom status, and a day of worship and rededication to God. The future blessing of both king and people depended on their continuing to obey God's laws.

Relevance to the children's lives

From this story, can you recall the things God knew about Saul before Saul knew them? Saul's God is the same God who cares about people living today. He knows everything about us, and we can be confident that he is in control of our lives. How should we feel about this?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we are glad that it is you who are in control of our lives and that you know and understand us. We praise you today for your greatness and goodness. Amen.

Memory verse

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ... He removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise” (Daniel 2:20-21).