

1 Samuel 8 — “Give Us a King”

Central Theme

Israel’s demand for a king reveals the danger of rejecting God’s rule in order to imitate the world. The passage calls men to trust God’s kingship while pointing forward to the righteous King whom God would provide.

I. The Failure of Human Leadership

1 Samuel 8:1–3

- Samuel grew old and appointed his sons as judges.
- Joel and Abijah did not walk in their father’s ways.
- They pursued dishonest gain, accepted bribes, and perverted justice.

Principle: A godly heritage is a blessing, but it does not guarantee a godly life.

Application for men:

- Leadership must be grounded in personal integrity.
- A man may provide materially while neglecting the spiritual condition of his household.
- Authority becomes corrupt when it is used for personal advantage.

Discussion:

1. What particular sins disqualified Samuel’s sons from trustworthy leadership?
2. What does this teach us about the relationship between character and competence?
3. How can men guard against using positions of authority for selfish purposes?

II. The Demand for Worldly Conformity

1 Samuel 8:4–5

“Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

Israel’s request arose from legitimate concerns:

- Samuel was old.
- His sons were corrupt.
- The nation faced continuing threats.

But their proposed solution exposed a deeper problem: they wanted to become like the surrounding nations.

Principle: A legitimate concern does not justify an unbelieving solution.

Application for men:

- Fear can tempt us to adopt the world's definitions of leadership, strength, and success.
- Men often seek visible control rather than trusting God's unseen providence.
- We must evaluate our desires not only by what we want, but by why we want it.

Discussion:

1. Which parts of Israel's concern were legitimate?
 2. What was wrong with wanting to be "like all the nations"?
 3. Where are Christian men tempted to measure success by worldly standards?
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III. The Rejection of God's Kingship

1 Samuel 8:6–9

Samuel was displeased, but he responded correctly: he prayed to the Lord.

God revealed the true nature of Israel's demand:

"They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

Israel's request was part of a longstanding pattern of idolatry and unbelief. They wanted security through a visible human ruler instead of dependence upon their covenant God.

Principle: The desire to control our lives is ultimately a challenge to God's authority.

Application for men:

- When troubled, pray before reacting.
- Our surface problems often reveal deeper heart allegiances.
- A man may acknowledge God verbally while functionally ruling his own life.

Discussion:

1. What can men learn from Samuel's immediate response?
 2. Why did God describe the request as a rejection of himself?
 3. In what areas are we most tempted to resist God's rule?
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IV. The Cost of Counterfeit Security

1 Samuel 8:10–18

Samuel warned the people what their desired king would do. The repeated phrase is significant:

"He will take."

The king would take:

- Their sons for his army and service.

- Their daughters for his household.
- Their best fields, vineyards, and produce.
- Their servants and livestock.
- A tenth of their possessions.
- Ultimately, “you shall be his slaves.”

Israel wanted a king who would protect them, but that king would also exploit them.

Principle: Every substitute for God eventually becomes a master.

Application for men:

- Idols promise freedom and security but produce bondage.
- Career, money, reputation, pleasure, and control become cruel masters when they occupy God’s place.
- Men must consider where their ambitions are leading their families.

Discussion:

1. What is communicated by the repetition of “he will take”?
2. What modern idols promise security but eventually enslave men?
3. How can a man recognize that a good desire has become a ruling desire?

V. The Persistence of Unbelief

1 Samuel 8:19–22

Despite the warning, the people refused to listen:

“No! But there shall be a king over us.”

They wanted a king for three reasons:

1. To be like the other nations.
2. To judge or govern them.
3. To fight their battles.

The first reason is contrary to God’s will for the nation. The last two were responsibilities God had already fulfilled for Israel. Their problem was not that God had failed them, but that they no longer trusted him.

God granted their request, not necessarily as his approval, but as a form of judgment upon their stubbornness.

Principle: Sometimes God judges people by allowing them to have what they insist upon having.

Application for men:

- Refusing godly warnings hardens the heart.
- We should fear a will so stubborn that it will not accept correction.
- Men need brothers who will confront them before their desires become destructive.

Discussion:

1. Why did Israel continue demanding a king after hearing Samuel's warning?
2. What is the difference between God approving a request and permitting it?
3. How should a godly man respond when Scripture or another believer corrects him?

Christ-Centered Conclusion: The King We Truly Need

Israel's desire for a king was not inherently wrong. God had already anticipated kingship in the law (Deuteronomy 17:14–20), and he had promised that kings would come through Abraham and Jacob. The sin lay in their motives, timing, and rejection of God.

Israel wanted a king **like the nations**. God would eventually provide a King unlike every other king.

- Israel's kings would take; Jesus came to give.
- Earthly kings conscript subjects; Jesus lays down his life for his people.
- Sinful rulers burden their people; Jesus gives rest to the burdened.
- Human kings fight to preserve their lives; Jesus wins the battle by surrendering his life.
- Saul would look impressive outwardly; Jesus rules in perfect righteousness.

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”
—Mark 10:45

Main Challenge for Men

Every man lives under a king. The question is not whether we will serve, but who will serve. Rejecting Christ's rule does not produce freedom; it simply places us under another master. Godly manhood begins by submitting ourselves, our ambitions, our families, and our leadership to Jesus Christ, the true and righteous King.