



the **GOSPEL**PROJECT

FOR STUDENTS

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS
LEADER GUIDE

VOLUME 4
SUMMER 2022

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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- # INTRO OPTIONS

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- The **Teaching Plan** is designed to help you lead the session material, providing biblical content and instructions for when to read the biblical passages and ask related questions.
- The **Commentary** is additional material that complements the Teaching Plan. The material found on this page will give you additional insight into the biblical text and help you better prepare to lead each session. However, leaders must decide how to use the content here during group time.

- The **His Story** section also includes other key components unique to *The Gospel Project*, such as the Christ Connection, 99 Essential Doctrines, and Big Question materials, all of which will also be included in the Daily Discipleship Guide.



Each session will contain a direct look at how the content studied connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture points to Him.



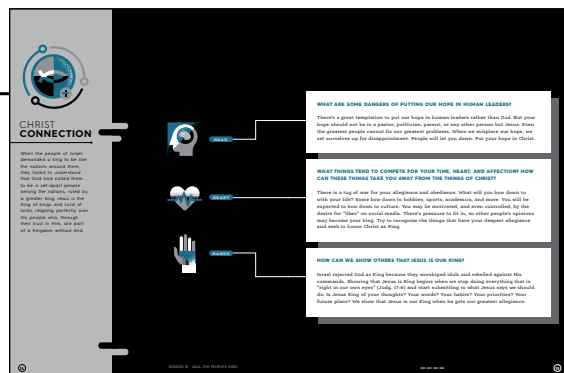
Throughout the course of the three-year study, students will learn 99 essential doctrines. Each session will contain an essential doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material, for the purpose of developing a student's biblical worldview.



This section will bring up overarching questions related to the text studied in each session. This is designed to bring greater clarity about a specific part of the text, answer questions students might have, and to help students be able to better understand the entire storyline of the Bible.

HEAD/HEART/HANDS

The **Head/Heart/Hands** section is designed to show how God's Story connects with our own stories today. It is here we will see how the biblical storyline for each session challenges the ways we think, feel, and live from day to day. While this certainly happens on an individual level, we do want to stress to students that this calling and mission to live differently is something all Christians share and pursue in common.



LEADER PACK

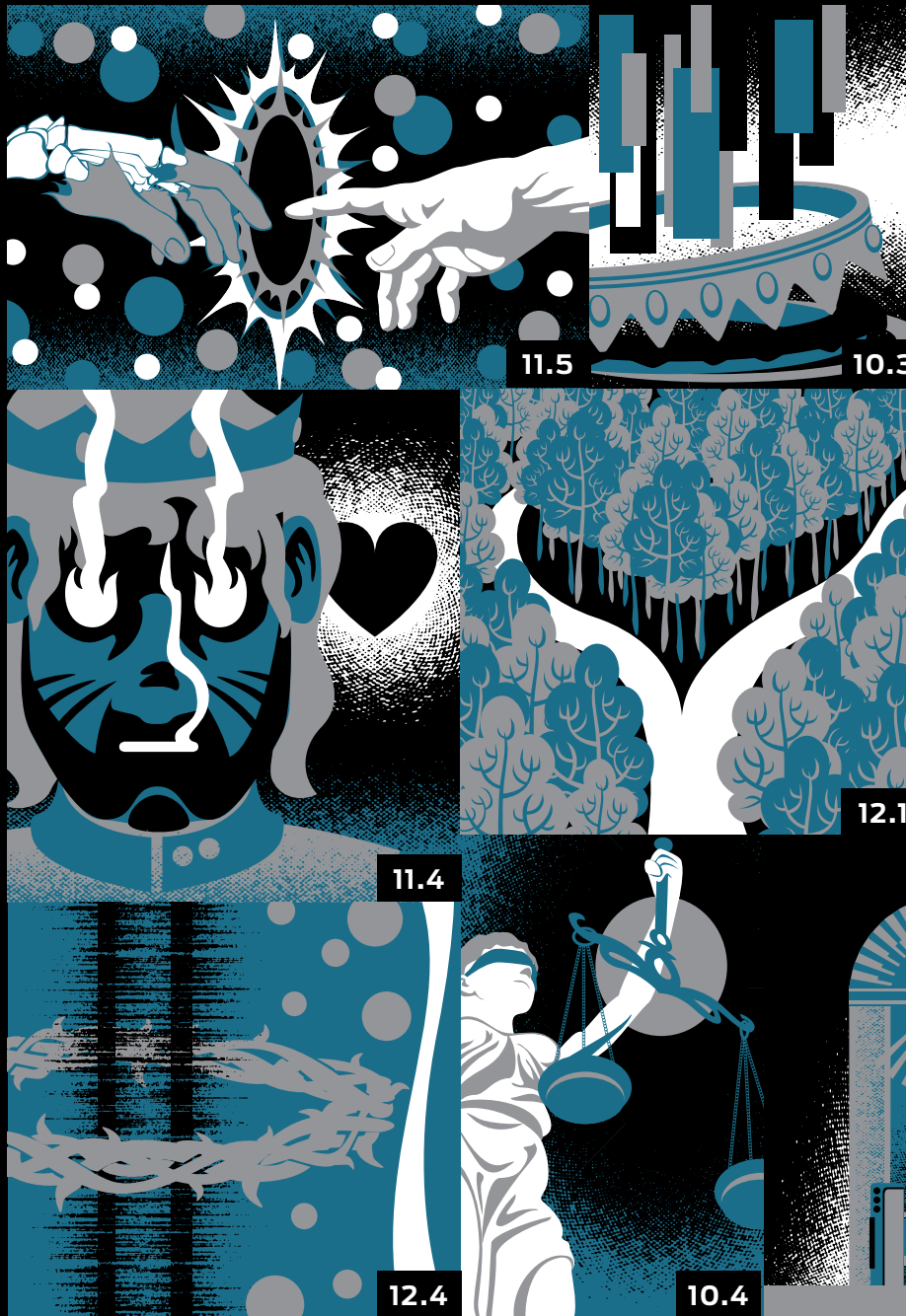
The **Leader Pack** provides additional ways to make the session interactive with PowerPoint templates, posters, and other additional resources to support both leader preparation and group time.



STUDENT DEVOTIONS

Students remember 30 percent of what they hear and 70 percent of what they say and write. In an effort to get students more involved in the biblical storyline of Scripture, and in their own personal discipleship, we have included five days of devotions following each session in the **Daily Discipleship Guide**. As a leader, emphasize weekly how important it is for students to read these devotions and develop the spiritual discipline of being personally in the Word of God. These devotions will not only help fill in the gaps of the biblical storyline not covered in the material, but they will also equip students to rightly handle the Word of truth by providing simple techniques to studying the Bible as illustrated by the 7 Arrows. The pages are perforated so that students can tear them out and take them home.

FROM UNITY TO DIVISION



10.1 SAUL, THE PEOPLE'S KING

10.2 SAUL, THE DELIVERING KING

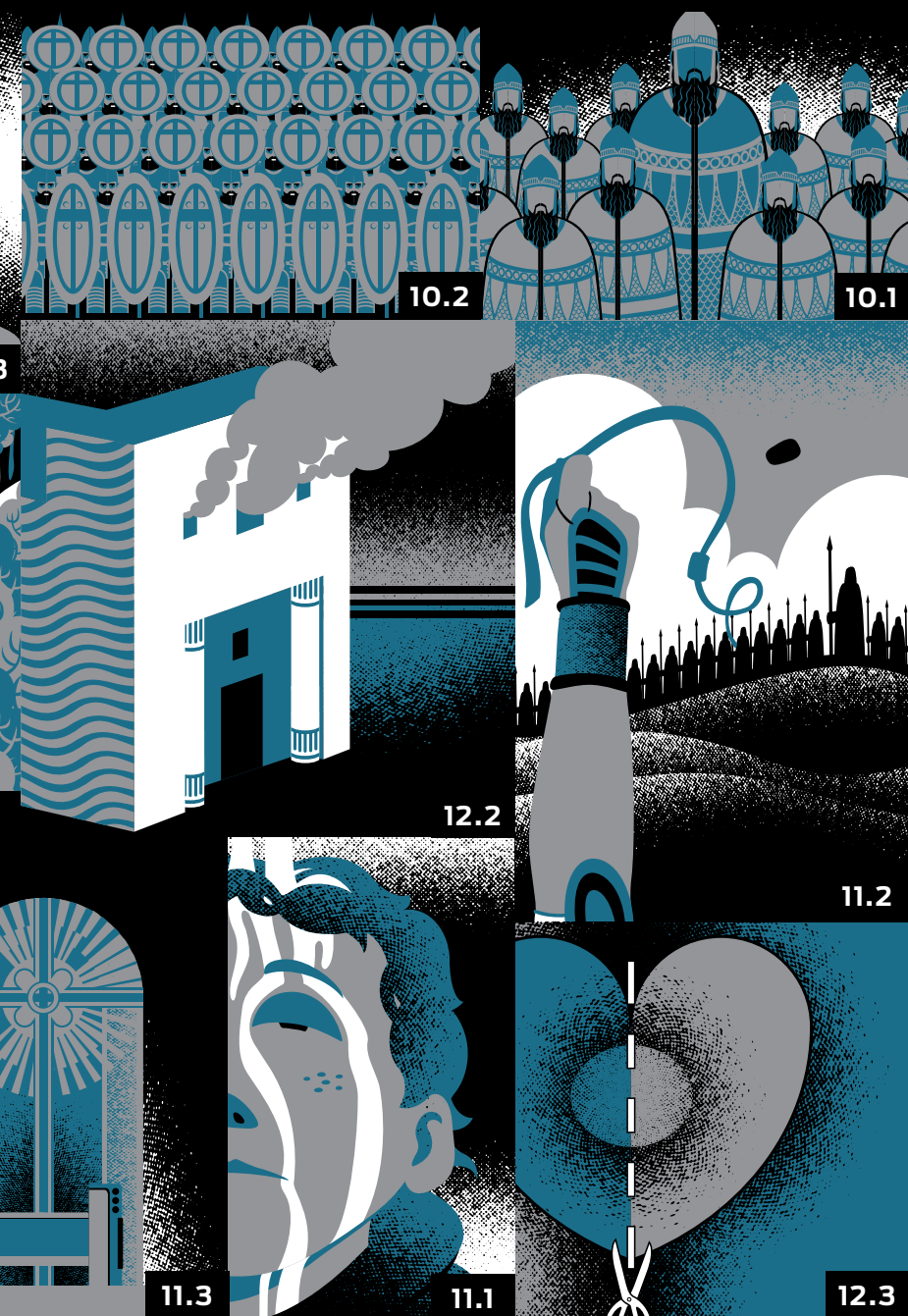
10.3 SAUL, THE FAILED KING

10.4 GOD, THE JUST KING

11.1 DAVID, THE CHOSEN KING

11.2 DAVID, THE VICTORIOUS KING

11.3 DAVID, THE FAITHFUL KING



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11.4 DAVID, THE FAILED KING

11.5 GOD, THE GRACIOUS KING

12.1 SOLOMON, THE WISE KING

12.2 SOLOMON, THE WORSHIPING KING

12.3 SOLOMON, THE FAILED KING

12.4 GOD, THE MERCIFUL KING




AUTHOR & CONTENT EDITOR

ZAC ETHRIDGE

In Volume 4, Israel requested a king like the surrounding nations—someone to fight their battles (see 1 Sam. 8:20). In doing so, they rejected the King who'd led them in battle for generations: Yahweh. God gave them what they asked for and commanded Samuel to anoint Saul as king of Israel. He was the epitome of a king like the nations: outwardly mighty but spiritually weak.

Saul's kingdom experienced early success, but he was not wholeheartedly committed to the Lord. He rejected the word of the Lord, and as a result, God rejected Saul as king. God determined to give the throne to the youngest son of Jesse: David. As a young shepherd, David was nothing like Saul or the kings of the nations. But God does not choose based on outward appearances; He looks at the heart. David would defeat Goliath and God would establish his throne.

Though David would fail, he turned back to the Lord with his whole heart (see Ps. 51). God forgave him and reassured him of the promise to establish his throne forever. David's son, Solomon, built the temple and ruled with wisdom. But Solomon's heart was divided. Tragically, his heart was a preview of Israel's future: divided and idolatrous. But generations later, God raised up a son of David named Jesus who obeyed God with all His heart. He triumphed over the giants of sin and death. He rules with wisdom forever. Israel needed God, but wanted a king. Jesus came to us as a king in order to bring us to God. We pray these sessions will help your students serve Jesus as their king with an undivided heart. May He give them the wisdom to live as citizens of His kingdom and shine His light to their neighbors and the nations.



"HUMANS DO NOT
SEE WHAT THE LORD
SEES, FOR HUMANS SEE
WHAT IS VISIBLE, BUT THE
LORD SEES THE HEART."

1 SAMUEL 16:7



SAUL THE PEOPLE'S KING

MAIN POINT

The greatest King is God Himself.

1 SAMUEL 8:4-9 • ISRAEL DEMANDS A HUMAN KING

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. **5** They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have." **6** When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand wrong, so he prayed to the LORD. **7** But the LORD told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king . . . **9** Listen to them, but solemnly warn them and tell them about the customary rights of the king who will reign over them."

1 SAMUEL 9:1-2; 10:1-10 • SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL AS KING

1 There was a prominent man of Benjamin . . . **2** He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man. There was no one more impressive among the Israelites than he. He stood a head taller than anyone else . . . **1** Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it out on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, "Hasn't the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance? . . . **6** The Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully on you, you will prophesy with them, and you will be transformed. **7** When these signs have happened to you, do whatever your circumstances require because God is with you. **8** Afterward, go ahead of me to Gilgal. I will come to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice fellowship offerings. Wait seven days until I come to you and show you what to do." **9** When Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed his heart, and all the signs came about that day. **10** When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully on him, and he prophesied along with them.

1 SAMUEL 10:17-24 • GOD REVEALS SAUL AS KING

17 Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah **18** and said to the Israelites, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the power of the Egyptians and all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' **19** But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your troubles and afflictions. You said to him, 'You must set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans." **20** Samuel had all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the tribe of Benjamin was selected. **21** Then he had the tribe of Benjamin come forward by its clans, and the Matrite clan was selected. Finally, Saul son of Kish was selected. But when they searched for him, they could not find him. **22** They again inquired of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" The LORD replied, "There he is, hidden among the supplies." **23** They ran and got him from there. When he stood among the people, he stood a head taller than anyone else. **24** Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among the entire population." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

INTRO OPTION 1

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

SUPPLIES LIST

IMAGES

Split students up into three fairly even teams. Display for students three images of someone famous, altering two of them in some way. You could print them out and color in a different color their tie, shoes, something in the background, etc. Leave one the correct way as it was printed. The object of the game is to see if students can guess which one is the original. You can do as many rounds of this as you would like. In today's session, we will discover that God is the one true King and He alone is able to lead His people as they need.

INTRO OPTION 2

RULE MAKER

SUPPLIES LIST

NO SUPPLIES NEEDED.

IF YOU WERE A LEADER IN YOUR COMMUNITY (THE MAYOR, FOR EXAMPLE) WHAT RULES WOULD AND WOULD YOU NOT HAVE IN PLACE?

Have students tell you why it would be important for citizens to follow and submit to these rules. In today's session, we will learn that because we have trusted in Christ, the King of kings, for our salvation, we seek to put away all disobedience and submit to Him, so that the world, too, might experience redemption through Him and enter into God's kingdom.



1. ISRAEL DEMANDS A HUMAN KING

READ 1 SAMUEL 8:4-9

Samuel was the last of the judges (judges were leaders God raised up to lead Israel in the generations between Joshua and Saul). Samuel led Israel as a priest and judge, but as he grew older, the people desired a human king like the surrounding nations.

WHY WAS ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR A KING A REJECTION OF GOD?

God had personally led Israel out of Egypt. He had established a covenant with them—He would be their God and they would be His people (see Ex. 6:7). His presence and power to rule over them was manifested in the tabernacle and through the conquest. God was their King. So, Israel's desire for a human king was a rejection of God's Kingship over them and a rejection of Samuel, God's appointed leader. They had been rejecting Him all along, rebelling against Moses and then "doing what was right in their own eyes" through the Judges period (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). But this scene with Samuel was Israel's formal rejection of God as King.

IF YOU ARE HONEST, WHO DO YOU DESIRE TO BE LIKE—GOD OR THE WORLD? WHY?

Israel wanted to be like everyone else, but they didn't understand what it would cost them. God told Samuel to warn them of the "customary rights of the king" (1 Sam. 8:9). You can find those in 1 Samuel 4:11-18. Israel's demand to be like the nations around them came at a high price, and if we aren't careful, we can fall into the same trap. Satan deceives us by appealing to our sinful desires while disguising the potential consequences. God has not called us to be like everyone else; He redeemed us to make us set apart like Jesus.

2. SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL AS KING

READ 1 SAMUEL 9:1-2; 10:1-10

WHAT HAPPENED TO SAUL WHEN SAMUEL ANOINTED HIM KING OF ISRAEL?

When Saul was anointed king of Israel, God changed his heart and gave him His Spirit. This was more than ceremonial. Saul's physical anointing corresponded to a real, spiritual anointing. Saul was chosen for his stature, but God knew the most important thing would be his heart. Saul's success or failure as king would not depend upon his title or stature, but upon his heart and the Spirit's power in his life.



1 SAMUEL 8:4-9

8:4-6. “In spite of its apparent attractiveness, the elders’ demand contained at least one aspect that violated a fundamental tenet of the Torah. Israel was to be distinct from the nations (cf. Lev 20:26; Num 23:9), and moves motivated by a desire to conform to pagan ways were bound to create problems . . . It amounted to an attempt to accomplish through a political act that which could only be achieved through ongoing spiritual responsibility (cf. Judg 3:4).”¹

8:7-9. “Israel’s demand for an earthly king is presented as merely the latest instance of their long-standing pattern of rejection. This tragic consistency in Israel’s relationship with the Lord [foreshadowed] an ominous future for Israel. As envisioned by Samuel, the earthly king that Israel demanded would assume rights otherwise reserved for the Lord, Israel’s divine king; he would demand a ‘tithe’ of Israel’s grain, vintage, and flocks (vv. 15, 17; cf. Lev 27:30, 32); he would lay claim to their land and even their own beings (vv. 11–14, 16; cf. Lev 25:23). Unlike the Lord, however, human kingship would not result in deliverance for Israel.”²

8:7-9. “Israel had rejected the Lord as their king (cf. Num 14:11). The people’s demand for an earthly king represented the political manifestation of a spiritual problem.”³

8:4-9. “All too often, Christians become more like Israel than we care to admit, forsaking the security of the lordship of God and grasping after a compromise authority in order to become something we were never meant to be.”⁴



BIG QUESTION

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THE DESIRE OR PRESSURE TO BE LIKE THE WORLD?

It is human nature to desire to be liked and accepted. We want to belong, and that can be a good thing. But that good desire can be twisted into a willingness to do whatever it takes to fit in. One way to overcome peer pressure is to have a community of faith. When you belong in the family of God, you don’t have to seek belonging elsewhere. Also, seek to understand why you believe something. If you know why it is best not to choose that activity or lifestyle, then you will be better equipped to make the right decision when pressured. Finally, and most importantly, make it your aim to please God. When you want to please God first and foremost, you will be able to stand against peer pressure since the thought of displeasing God will be more compelling than the fear of displeasing people.



SCRIPTURE READING

MAIN POINT

**The greatest King is God
Himself.**

HOW IS SAUL'S ANOINTING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S GRACE?

Saul was not the king Israel needed (because they already had God), but God made him into the kind of king Israel needed for the season they were in. They sinfully demanded a king, but God graciously gave them a king who was better than they deserved. He could have simply let Saul rule from his own wisdom and power. But God loved Israel, so He touched Saul's heart and gave him His Spirit. Despite Israel's poor decision, God was merciful and acted to lessen the damage of their foolish choice.

3. GOD REVEALS SAUL AS KING

READ 1 SAMUEL 10:17-24

WHY WAS SAUL CHOSEN TO BE KING OF ISRAEL? WAS THE CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING SAUL WISE? EXPLAIN.

It seems Saul was chosen for his stature. There was none who compared to his physical size in all of Israel. By giving Saul His Spirit when Samuel anointed him, God gave Israel the king that they needed. But by choosing the tallest and strongest Israelite, God was also giving Israel what it wanted. Saul was the epitome of a human king, the greatest among his peers, chosen for his size and strength. Ironically, Saul's size and strength would mean little when Israel needed a great champion the most. God would instead save Israel through a young shepherd named David.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM SAUL ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND HUMILITY?

Saul's story won't end well—pride will eventually get the better of him. But here at the beginning, Saul seems humbled and honored at the calling. Maybe he knew that God was not pleased with Israel's desire for a king and was hesitant to assume such a role. He may, indeed, have acted too hesitant for someone who had been anointed and commissioned by God. But at the very least, we can say that Saul wasn't seeking position or authority. There was no gloating or chest thumping. And this is hard to do—think about the last time something good happened to you and you immediately wanted to find someone to brag to. This position was thrust upon him, and he accepted it with a healthy amount of humility rather than prideful ambition. Perhaps it's best to place power and authority in the hands of those who are not seeking such things.



1 SAMUEL 9:1-2; 10:1-10

9:1-2. “The feature that most obviously set Saul apart from other Israelites was his physical appearance; he was ‘a head taller than any of the others.’ Although this characteristic would normally be considered an asset, the narrator may have included this detail as a subtle indictment of Israel’s first king. Saul is the only Israelite specifically noted in the Bible as being tall; elsewhere it was only Israel’s enemies whose height was noted (cf. Num 13:33; Deut 1:28; 2:10; 9:2; 1 Sam 17:4). Israel had asked for a king ‘like all the other nations’ (8:20), and the Lord was giving them the desires of their heart, even down to the physical details!”⁵

10:1-10. “This is the earliest reference to the inner changes God works through the ministry of his Spirit . . . Though certainly not identical to the New Testament concept of the Holy Spirit, this passage is compatible with its teaching and at least illustrates the active presence of God in the affairs of individuals, to transform and empower them for his service.”⁶

1 SAMUEL 10:17-24

10:17-24. “The process utilized here to identify the king was meant to emphasize that Israel’s next leader was selected by divine prerogative, not human manipulation. As presented here, however, it serves a second function: it reinforces the notion that Saul’s selection was a divine judgment against Israel. The only other occasion in which an individual was selected using a method like that described in vv. 20–21 was when Achan was identified following a previous disastrous act of rebellion against the Lord (cf. Josh 7:16–18).”⁷



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE

CHRIST AS KING

God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

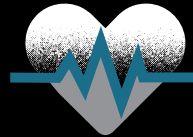


CHRIST CONNECTION

When the people of Israel demanded a king to be like the nations around them, they failed to understand that God had called them to be a set-apart people among the nations, ruled by a greater king. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, reigning perfectly over His people who, through their trust in Him, are part of a Kingdom without end.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

WHAT ARE SOME DANGERS OF PUTTING OUR HOPE IN HUMAN LEADERS?

There's a great temptation to put our hope in human leaders rather than God. But your hope should not be in a pastor, politician, parent, or any other person but Jesus. Even the greatest people cannot fix our greatest problems. When we misplace our hope, we set ourselves up for disappointment. People will let you down. Put your hope in Christ.

WHAT THINGS TEND TO COMPETE FOR YOUR TIME, HEART, AND AFFECTION? HOW CAN THESE THINGS TAKE YOU AWAY FROM THE THINGS OF CHRIST?

There is a tug of war for your allegiance and obedience. What will you bow down to with your life? Some bow down to hobbies, sports, academics, and more. You will be expected to bow down to culture. You may be motivated, and even controlled, by the desire for "likes" on social media. There's pressure to fit in, so other people's opinions may become your king. Try to recognize the things that have your deepest allegiance and seek to honor Christ as King.

HOW CAN WE SHOW OTHERS THAT JESUS IS OUR KING?

Israel rejected God as King because they worshiped idols and rebelled against His commands. Showing that Jesus is King begins when we stop doing everything that is "right in our own eyes" (Judg. 17:6) and start submitting to what Jesus says we should do. Is Jesus King of your thoughts? Your words? Your habits? Your priorities? Your future plans? We show that Jesus is our King when he gets our greatest allegiance.