

BECAUSE OF YOUR HARDENED HEART

UNIT 10 • SESSION 2

# SAUL

## THE DELIVERING KING

### MAIN POINT

Jesus's kingdom is marked by unity, victory, and mercy.

### 1 SAMUEL 11:1-7 • KING SAUL UNITES ISRAEL

**1** Nahash the Ammonite came up and laid siege to Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." **2** Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I'll make one with you on this condition: that I gouge out everyone's right eye and humiliate all Israel." **3** "Don't do anything to us for seven days," the elders of Jabesh said to him, "and let us send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. If no one saves us, we will surrender to you." **4** When the messengers came to Gibeah, Saul's hometown, and told the terms to the people, all wept aloud. **5** Just then Saul was coming in from the field behind his oxen. "What's the matter with the people? Why are they weeping?" Saul inquired, and they repeated to him the words of the men from Jabesh. **6** When Saul heard these words, the Spirit of God suddenly came powerfully on him, and his anger burned furiously. **7** He took a team of oxen, cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by messengers who said, "This is what will be done to the ox of anyone who doesn't march behind Saul and Samuel." As a result, the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they went out united.

### 1 SAMUEL 11:8-11 • KING SAUL DEFENDS ISRAEL

**8** Saul counted them at Bezek. There were three hundred thousand Israelites and thirty thousand men from Judah. **9** He told the messengers who had come, "Tell this to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Deliverance will be yours tomorrow by the time the sun is hot.'" So the messengers told the men of Jabesh, and they rejoiced. **10** Then the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Tomorrow we will come out, and you can do whatever you want to us." **11** The next day Saul organized the troops into three divisions. During the morning watch, they invaded the Ammonite camp and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. There were survivors, but they were so scattered that no two of them were left together.

### 1 SAMUEL 11:12-15 • KING SAUL SHOWS MERCY IN ISRAEL

**12** Afterward, the people said to Samuel, "Who said that Saul should not reign over us? Give us those men so we can kill them!" **13** But Saul ordered, "No one will be executed this day, for today the LORD has provided deliverance in Israel." **14** Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let's go to Gilgal, so we can renew the kingship there." **15** So all the people went to Gilgal, and there in the LORD's presence they made Saul king. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings in the LORD's presence, and Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

### INTRO OPTION 1

## PICK A LEADER

#### SUPPLIES LIST

NO SUPPLIES NEEDED.

Split students up into two to three teams. Make a list of three fictional leaders they can choose from to lead them. For example, leader #1 can be older, experienced, and have no degree. Leader #2 can be younger, with a degree, and little experience. Leader #3 can be a mid-aged person with no degree, but a ton of experience. Ask them who they would choose to be their leader and why? You can do this a few different times, changing up the descriptions of the people. In today's session, we will learn that God brings victory through His chosen leaders, who are called to express God's character in their leadership.

### INTRO OPTION 2

## EMOJI

#### SUPPLIES LIST

NO SUPPLIES NEEDED.

Have three students come up to the front. Without the other students knowing, have each of the three students come up with a new facial emoji and then act it out. Have the other students guess what the emoji's expression is trying to communicate. In today's session, we will learn that God brings victory through His chosen leaders, who are called to express God's character in their leadership.



### **1. KING SAUL UNITES ISRAEL**

## READ 1 SAMUEL 11:1-7

Saul had been anointed king of Israel for only a month when his people came under attack at Jabesh-Gilead. News of the siege came south to Gibeah, Saul's hometown just north of Jerusalem. The situation was distressing. The Ammonites intended to "humiliate all Israel" (1 Sam. 11:2). This was Saul's first great test as king. Would he be able to unite the nation and defend it against its enemies?

### **WHAT IS RIGHTEOUS ANGER? HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM HOW WE DEFINE ANGER?**

It is wrong to be indifferent toward the evil in the world. It is ungodly to feel unmoved by the suffering of others. When Saul heard of the impending atrocities at Jabesh, the Spirit of God rushed upon him and "his anger burned furiously" (1 Sam. 11:6). It's been said by many that the opposite of love is not hate; it's indifference. Saul demonstrates his love by actively standing up against evil doers.

### **HOW HAVE YOU SEEN PEOPLE RALLY TOGETHER WHEN THE STAKES ARE HIGH? WHY DO YOU THINK TRAGEDY OR HIGH STAKES SITUATIONS UNITE PEOPLE?**

When things are going smoothly, people tend to default to a kind of self-centered mindset in life. But tragedy wakes us from that slumber. It brings into focus the things that really matter most and compels us to act. When there is a family in need or an urgent crisis in the community, it's amazing how well we can come together. Believers should lead the way in bringing help and relief to those in need. The world around us is also in spiritual crisis, and the church must unite to fulfill the Great Commission with urgency.

### **2. KING SAUL DEFENDS ISRAEL**

## READ 1 SAMUEL 11:8-11

In Saul's first great test as king, he was able to mobilize the whole nation to defend their fellow Israelites. He united a great army of three hundred and thirty thousand! The people of Jabesh rejoiced. When they stood no chance of saving themselves, their king came to rescue them. By morning, their enemy would be routed in total defeat.



## 1 SAMUEL 11:1-7

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**11:6.** “The account contains parallels with judges from Israel’s pre-monarchic period and portrays Saul as a continuation of those who receive the Spirit of God, are roused into activity, and are used mightily to accomplish deliverance for God’s people.”<sup>9</sup>

**11:6-7.** “Calls to involvement in geographically limited conflicts had been mostly unsuccessful in Israelite history (cf. Judg 5:16–17; 8:1; 12:2–3; 21:5) . . . The Israelites’ anxiety may have been increased when they remembered the punishment inflicted on a city—ironically, on Jabesh Gilead—that had once refused a similar call to assemble (Judg. 21:5).”<sup>10</sup>

**11:6-7.** “The Israelites were to follow ‘Saul and Samuel’ (v. 7). In spite of Saul’s new title, Samuel remained the proven and respected leader who had led Israel for a generation. A time would come later when the ministry paths of Saul and Samuel would diverge (cf. 15:26–35), but for now they worked together effectively in confronting a common enemy.”<sup>11</sup>

## 1 SAMUEL 11:8-11

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**11:8-11.** “Here, for the first time, the king of Israel, the anointed of Yahweh, is the means of salvation for his people.”<sup>12</sup>

**11:8-11.** “Somewhere between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. they attacked the Ammonite camp and slaughtered their army. So successful was the attack that no unified group of survivors remained.”<sup>13</sup>



## BIG QUESTION

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### HOW CAN WE TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHTEOUS ANGER AND SINFUL ANGER?

The apostle Paul quoted King David saying to be angry, but to not sin (see Eph. 4:26). Jesus Himself was angry at times. And yet, we are warned that man’s anger does not produce righteousness (see James 1:20). So how do we tell the difference? Jon Bloom writes, “Righteous anger is being angry at what makes God angry. And ‘righteous anger’ is the right word order. Because God is not fundamentally angry. He is fundamentally righteous. God’s anger is a byproduct of his righteousness . . . So our anger is righteous when we are angered over evil that profanes God’s holiness and perverts his goodness.”<sup>8</sup> So, godly anger cares for God and others, being moved by love, while sinful anger comes from pride and is moved by selfishness, hatred, and the like.





## SCRIPTURE READING

### MAIN POINT

**Jesus's kingdom is marked by  
unity, victory, and mercy.**

### WHAT DO THE RESULTS OF THE BATTLE SHOW US ABOUT THE POWER OF UNITY?

Leaders, feel free to follow up with questions like “Why is it important for Christians to be united?” or “What is the battle Christians face today in which unity is critical?” and give students time to speak before reading the answer below.

Saul led the Israelites to a total victory over the Ammonites before lunchtime. Their unity led to victory. We underestimate what we can do as the people of God. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church, but we must fight the good fight together. We must follow our King, Jesus, onto the spiritual battlefield. Often, we are too busy fighting each other. But Jesus's prayer is that we would be one just as He and the Father are one (see John 17:21).

### WHAT CAN THIS STORY TEACH US ABOUT STANDING UP FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES?

The citizens of Jabesh could do nothing to rescue themselves from the powerful army just outside their city gates. Their only hope was for their fellow Israelites to fight for them. When someone is bullied or mistreated, it is our responsibility to help them. Love moves us to action, and that often means being willing to stand in the gap for people who are vulnerable or cannot stand up for themselves. We should not mistreat one another or tolerate the mistreatment of people around us. Be on the lookout for those who are alone and left out. Be a group of friends who are kind to everyone rather than an exclusive club.

### 3. KING SAUL SHOWS MERCY IN ISRAEL

## READ 1 SAMUEL 11:12-15

### HOW DID SAUL DEMONSTRATE HUMILITY IN THIS STORY?

Rather than take vengeance on those who did not support him or take credit for the victory, Saul gave all the praise to God for their victory. Saul was not driven by ego. Pride takes revenge, but humility shows mercy. Pride takes the spotlight, but humility honors God.

### HOW DOES SAUL'S MERCY AS KING POINT US TO THE MERCY OF CHRIST?

Jesus is the greatest King of all. King Jesus extends mercy beyond measure to those who do not deserve it. When He would be justified to take revenge, Jesus has chosen to show us grace upon grace. Saul's mercy in this story is just a small glimpse of the mercy to be experienced in Christ's kingdom.



**11:8-11.** “The number of men mentioned as assembling for war was the second largest in Genesis to 2 Kings (v. 8). Only the number of Israelites assembling for war against Benjamin was greater (Judg 20:2, 17). The separate counts provided for Israel and Judah suggest that the tribal schism first hinted at in the Book of Joshua (11:21) was growing. It also sets the stage for difficulties that would plague David’s rise to national kingship (cf. 2 Sam 2:10–11) and ultimately split the country (1 Kgs 12:19–20).”<sup>14</sup>

## 1 SAMUEL 11:12-15

**11:12-15.** “He had fulfilled their expectations for one who could lead Israel successfully in battle (cf. 8:20), and so they desired to renew their commitments to the new leader and the new form of government. In the process they wanted to squelch all opposition to Saul and Israel’s new direction.”<sup>15</sup>

**11:12-15.** “‘Saul, who apparently was in Samuel’s company at the time of the request (cf. v. 7), interrupted the discourse. Majestically he intervened to avert a lynching, and thus spared the lives of his subjects. Instead of focusing on the evil of men, Saul encouraged the people to focus on the goodness of God, ‘for this day the Lord has rescued Israel’ (v. 13).”<sup>16</sup>

**11:12-15.** “This chapter in particular portrays the anointed one of Israel as the individual whom Yahweh has confirmed first by the Spirit of God, then by military victory over the enemy, and finally by the power to change the divine right of judgment into the divine right of grace. This is the way the messiah looks when he appears in Israel.”<sup>17</sup>



## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE

### ASPECTS OF THE ATONEMENT

Christ’s substitutionary death on our behalf stands at the center of His atoning work. Without this work, there is no gospel (1 Cor. 15:3). While this substitutionary aspect is central to the atonement, His death also supremely demonstrates God’s love for sinners (John 15:13; 1 John 4:10). It shows us how seriously God takes sin. It satisfies every requirement for God to be able to forgive the failures of humanity. And it puts Christ’s cosmic victory over sin, Satan, and death on display through His resurrection (Col. 2:15). Every aspect of the atonement should inspire gratitude, praise, and a desire for obedience, because it is only through Christ that we are reconciled.

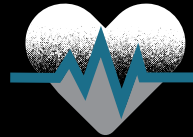


## CHRIST CONNECTION

King Saul united his people to secure victory over their enemy and then extended mercy to those they had conquered. King Jesus extended mercy to His enemies by giving up His life to conquer sin so that all who turn to Him are forgiven and united with God and one another in faith.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

### **IF WE ARE GOING TO SHOW MORE MERCY TO OTHERS, WHAT MAY NEED TO CHANGE ABOUT OUR THINKING?**

If we are going to show mercy to others, we first must remember the mercy that Christ has shown us. Remembering God's mercy toward us is both humbling and inspiring. We also need to stop keeping score against each other. Our tendency is to keep a running tally of the way others have wronged us. But when we stop keeping score, we can start to shift our focus from getting even to getting along and looking for ways to love and serve others.

### **WHAT OBSTACLES MUST WE OVERCOME TO BE MORE UNIFIED AS BELIEVERS?**

There are a multitude of issues that divide us. We are divided by schools, friend groups, politics, and more. Discuss the biggest obstacles for your specific group or church. It is easy to look at the world or the church at large and say we are divided. But it is harder to look in the mirror and assess the reasons we are divided in our context. If we can honestly identify the obstacles, we can begin to strategically work toward unity.

### **WHAT STEPS CAN WE TAKE TO BUILD UNITY AMONG BELIEVERS?**

Love and truth are the foundations of unity. We will not be unified without love. We need to take the time to listen, to know others personally, and try to understand where they are coming from. Unity can even be achieved in disagreement, so long as love, respect, and charity are features of the relationship. But unity will not happen naturally or by accident. It is our responsibility to seek peace and maintain the unity of the Spirit.