

Unexpected Leadership

Changes in leadership can be accompanied by anxiety and uncertainty, both in public life and church life. Saul, Israel's own choice for king, ultimately disobeyed God. Change in leadership was needed. Israel's next king would be one of God's choosing, and God's choice would surprise everyone. God, we are told, looks to the content of the heart, not external qualities. Are we willing to embrace unlikely leaders? Can we worship an unpredictable God?

Focus scripture: 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13

God regrets allowing Saul to become Israel's first king and solves the problem by providing for a new king. This time, the people would not get a vote. The process for selecting as well as the result would surprise everyone. God looks beyond superficial attributes and sees deep into the heart.

That God had regrets about allowing Saul to become king is surprising in and of itself. Surprising, too, that God provides a pretext for Samuel's visit with the people of Bethlehem so as not to arouse Saul's anger or suspicion. A pattern emerges: God is always faithful and remains engaged with God's people, but not always in predictable ways.

One by one, God evaluates seven of Jesse's sons in search of Israel's next king and rejects them all. The exterior – skin colour, ethnicity, age, gender – can sway decisions when we hire people or invite others to join our cause. God does not use physical characteristics, birth order, or other standard criteria. The core of one's character and intentions is what matters to God. Samuel anoints the almost overlooked young person, David.

That God chooses unexpected leaders says as much about the nature of God as it does about the qualifications of the people God calls. Who might we overlook when choosing leaders because we stereotype and prejudge?

Are we willing to be the unexpected leader to answer an unexpected call? Though often frightening, we need not fear. **Psalm 20** affirms that God is with us. Those who trust in God's provision live strong and joyful lives.

2 Corinthians 5:6–10, (11–13) 14–17 reminds us that we live with confidence, trusting that Christ's death and resurrection assure us a purpose higher than that of our own limited capabilities – we are made new in Christ. Old ways of understanding are gone. We live not just for ourselves, but for Christ; Christ's love urges us on.

Mark 4:26–34 Jesus tells the parable of the tiny mustard seed to reveal God's surprising, unexpected plan to use even small communities of faith to accomplish God's will.

Similarly, God used David, the youngest in his family, to accomplish God's will. God's realm may seem unattainable at times, but Jesus assures us that it is alive – growing and spreading even from small acts of faith until everyone finds a home in it.


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Leadership is not an end unto itself. If it is, then we need to carefully examine our motivation for wanting it or running from it, especially if we see that God is the one calling us to lead. When unexpected authority is given to us or placed into our midst, what can we do to understand better how this might be part of God's plan?



Focus scripture
1 Samuel 15:34—
16:13

Additional scriptures
Psalm 20
2 Corinthians 5:6–10,
(11–13), 14–17
Mark 4:26–34

 *Seasons of the Spirit*
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the *Revised*
Common Lectionary.

**Yes, no, maybe,
not now, who –
me? How will we
answer when you
call us to leader-
ship, Holy One?
Whatever our
answer may be,
may we come to
it knowing you
will equip us and
guide us through
every step of the
journey. Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Young children usually love being singled out and chosen as a “special one.” Whether they are set apart as the birthday child or child of the day at daycare or school, or receive special recognition at home, they usually enjoy the attention. They also enjoy being chosen to do something special or assume some type of special responsibility. If children have older siblings at home, they may be less used to being the one chosen for a special job (and perhaps the resulting special treat), so today’s story is a wonderful opportunity to help them realize that God chooses each one of us and knows we are special.

This week continues the story begun last

week of Samuel and the choosing of kings for Israel. This week children will meet the young boy David, and in this story can get a sense of God’s recognition and celebration of him as special. A shared ritual this week is a blessing with oil. Anointing is an ancient and powerful symbol of being set apart, of being special. When children are blessed with oil and hear their names spoken, they can experience a sense of belonging. Inviting the children to participate in the ritual is a clear indication of how they, too, can offer each other signs of God’s love. Pray for each child by name and consider each child’s uniqueness as you ask for God’s blessing on your group.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 15).
- ❑ Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Songbook*; *SGF Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring a musical instrument (such as violin, flute, recorder), if possible.
- ❑ Bring “Gathering Song” (“[Additional Songs](#),” p. 88) or “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring large star stickers in bowl or basket.
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week’s resource sheet “[A New King](#)” and story figures

“Samuel,” “Young David,” and “King David” from the [Storytelling Resources](#) posters.

- ❑ Bring small container of baby oil.
- ❑ Bring eight happy faces, seven cut from blue construction paper and one from yellow paper.
- ❑ Bring song “I’m a Child of God” (“[Additional Songs](#),” p. 88).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Singing:** song “I Am Amazing” (p. 11 in *SGF Songbook*; #7 on *SGF Music CD*)
- ❑ **Heart message:** red construction paper, stickers, paper doilies, confetti, glitter; make copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Heart Messages](#),” cut out heart shapes, and fold each one in half lengthwise.
- ❑ **Blessing bags:** small paper bags, small clean plastic or glass containers (such as medicine or vitamin bottles), baby oil, cotton balls, ribbon or yarn; print, “You are special to God” on each bag.

Bless

- ❑ Bring “Blessing Song” (“[Additional Songs](#),” p. 88) or “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



Unexpected Leadership

Scripture

1 Samuel
15:34—16:13

FOCUS To hear from a story about Samuel that God knows us deep inside

Gather

Welcome each child, saying “Hello, *(child’s name)*, we’re happy you’re here.” Invite the children to look at the musical instrument and touch it gently. Who knows the name of this instrument? What other instruments do children know?

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Light the candle, saying, “This candle reminds us of God’s love shining in the world.” Then repeat for each child, “God’s light shines in *(child’s name)*.”

Pray Thank you, God,
for all the wonderful
music that we can hear in your world.
Thank you for being with us
as we learn and grow. Amen.

Sing the “[Gathering Song](#)” (p. 88) or the “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

(Have the bowl with star stickers nearby.)

Priscilla: Hi, everyone! I’m so glad to see you.

Leader: Hello, Priscilla. We’re glad to see you, too. I have something to give you. *(Stick a large star onto Priscilla.)* This star shows that you are special.

Priscilla: Thank you! Oh, look, there are more stars! I wonder who these are for?

Leader: These stars are for everyone in this group, to remind us that we are all special. *(As you stick a star on each child, say his or her name, and say “God knows you are special.”)*

Priscilla: Look at all the stars! I think this is a very special group!

Leader: Yes, Priscilla, God thinks we are special too. In our story today we will hear about someone else who was special to God. *(Say goodbye to Priscilla.)*

- ☐ **Star qualities** Explain that sometimes star shapes can remind us that we are special. Go around the circle saying the name of each child in the group and naming a special quality that each one has. As you name each one, give the child a star sticker to put on a shirt or on the back of a hand. Remind the children that we are all special to God. In the Bible story today we will hear about someone else who was special to God.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the focus passage. Explain that this week we have another story about Samuel, a special leader. Remind the

children of last week’s story, when God helped Samuel to find a king to lead the people of Israel. In today’s story, it was time to choose a new king. Distribute story figures from the [Storytelling Resources](#) posters and invite children to help tell

the story based on **1 Samuel 15:34—16:13**, as you read from the resource sheet [“A New King.”](#)

After the story

Invite the children to talk about some of the things that kings might do. What would be the good things about being a king? What might be some of the hard things about being a king?

- **How do you think David, a shepherd boy, might have felt about becoming a king?**

Ritual Explain that when Samuel used oil to anoint David it was a sign that God chose David to be a special king. Place the container of oil in the middle of the group. Explain that we can use oil to show that God thinks we are special too. Dip a finger into the oil and gently dab the forehead or back of a hand of the child beside you (let the children choose where to be “anointed”) and say, “(Child’s name), God knows you are special.” Go around the circle and invite the children to anoint one another. Say the blessing as each child receives oil.

Sing [“I’m a Child of God”](#) (p. 88).

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Music** The Bible tells us that David played a harp when he was looking after the sheep. Invite children to pretend they are strumming on a guitar or a harp. Make some joyful sounds together. Teach the children the song, “I Am Amazing” (p. 11 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*; #7 on *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*) by inviting them to sing each line after you. Encourage children to point to self on the first verse, to another person for the second verse, to the whole group for the third verse, and to spread arms wide for the fourth verse.
- ❑ **Heart message** God knew David deep down inside and God knows us deep inside too. Give each child a folded paper heart (see resource sheet [“Heart Messages.”](#) As they open the



hearts, read the words aloud. Invite the children to glue their hearts onto red construction paper and to use the supplies to decorate around the hearts. Encourage them to keep their heart messages as a reminder that God knows them deep inside.

- ❑ **Blessing bags** Samuel anointed David with oil to show that one day David would be a special king. Oil can remind us that we are special too. Give each child a container and show them how to dip some cotton balls in the oil and place in their bottles. Distribute paper bags to decorate with markers. Have them put their containers of oil in their bags and tie closed with ribbon or yarn. Encourage the children to “anoint” their families with the words, “You are special.”

Bless

Gather in the worship space and light the candle again. Point to the musical instrument and say, “I wonder what kind of music David played when he was anointed by Samuel?” Listen to responses.

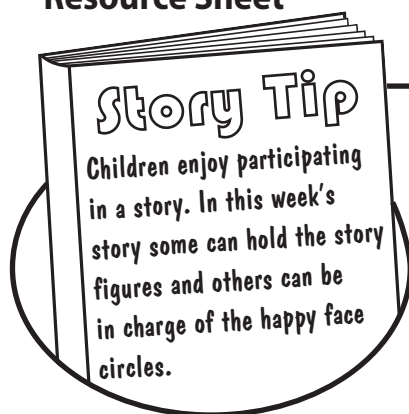
Pray Music tells us
God is near.
Thank you, God,
that you are here. Amen.

Sing the [“Blessing Song”](#) (p. 88) or the song “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Send each child out with the words “(Child’s name), God loves you and is with you always.”

Reflect

How were you able to help each child feel special during this session? Consider the ways in which you can continue to help them feel known and loved by God in the weeks ahead.



A New King

(based on 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13)

(Have the container of oil nearby.)

A long, long time ago there was a man named Samuel. *(Invite a child to hold up the Samuel figure.)* Samuel helped the people of Israel to live in God's way. Samuel had helped the people find their first king. *(Invite a child to hold up the King David figure.)* The first king's name was King Saul.

One day God spoke to Samuel. "It is time to find a new king," said God to Samuel.

Samuel wanted to do as God asked. But Samuel wasn't sure how to do this job. Samuel said to God, "Where will I go? How will I find the new king?"

God spoke to Samuel again. "Go and find a man called Jesse. Jesse has many children. One of them is going to be the new king. I will show you which one to choose. And take some oil with you to anoint the new king. *(Show the container of oil. Dip a finger in the oil and dab on the back of your hand, explaining that this is called anointing.)*

So Samuel travelled to the town where Jesse and his family lived. Samuel looked at Jesse's sons one by one. He didn't know which one he should anoint.

"This one is handsome," Samuel thought. *(Invite a child to hold up a blue happy face.)*

But God said, "No, not this one." *(Have the child put the happy face upside down on the floor.)*

Samuel looked at another son. "This one looks strong," Samuel thought. *(Invite another child to hold up a blue happy face.)*

But God said, "No, not this one." *(Have the child put the happy face upside down on the floor.)*

Samuel looked at five more sons. *(Invite five more children to each hold up a blue happy face.)*

But every time God said, "No, not this one." *(Invite the group to say together, "No, not this one." as the children put the rest of the blue happy faces upside down on the floor, one by one.)*

Samuel was getting worried. He said to Jesse, "Do you have any more children?"

Jesse said, "Well, there is one more. But he is the youngest son; he is a shepherd and he's out in the field looking after the sheep."

"Please send for David," said Samuel. "I need to see him too." David came and stood in front of Samuel.

And Samuel heard God say, "Yes! This is the one! David will be the king." *(Invite a child to hold up the yellow happy face.)*

Samuel carefully poured some oil on David's head to let everyone know that God had chosen David. One day, when David was older, he would be the new king. Until then, David watched the sheep and played his harp while he sang songs to God.



Heart Messages

God
knows
I am
amazing

Additional Songs

Gathering Song

(tune: "Farmer in the Dell")

We gather here to sing.
We gather here to pray.
We gather here to share our love.
We gather here today.

Blessing Song

(tune: "Head and Shoulders")

Let's go out to share God's love,
share God's love, share God's love.
Let's go out to share God's love,
in everything we do and say.

I'm a Child of God

(tune: "I'm a Little Teapot")

I'm a child of God and you are too.
God made me and God made you.
I can see and feel God everywhere.
God's love for us is always there.

Jesus Shared His Love

(tune: "Jesus Loves Me")

Jesus shared his love, I know.
Jesus helped his friends to grow.
Jesus taught his friends to share,
and he showed them how to care.

Yes, Jesus loves us. Yes, Jesus loves us.
Yes, Jesus loves us. And we can share love too.

God's Love

God's love is...

Higher than the highest mountain. (*Raise hands way up high.*)

Deeper than the deepest sea. (*Make a rolling wave motion with arms and hands.*)

Bigger than the space around us. (*Twirl around.*)

When we share God's love, our love is...

Taller than the tallest giraffe. (*Stretch arms up high.*)

Longer than a kangaroo's tail. (*Hop around.*)

Wider than an elephant. (*Hold arms out wide.*)

Showing Our Love

How can we show our love for God?

We can wave our arms up high! (*Wave arms above head.*)

How can we show our love for God?

We can clap our hands for joy! (*Clap hands loudly.*)

How can we show our love for God?

We can stomp our feet up and down! (*Jump up and down.*)

How can we show our love for God?

We can shout out loud! (*Shout "Hurray for God!"*)

How can we show our love for God?

We can dance all around. (*Do a little dance.*)

(*Encourage children to name other actions.*)

Showing Our Care

How do we show we're kind? How do we show we care?

We join our hands together. (*Join hands with a neighbour.*)

We give a little hug. (*Give another a gentle hug.*)

How do we show we're kind? How do we show we care?

We give a friend a helping hand. (*Reach out and give a gentle pat.*)

We share our books and toys. (*Hold both hands out in front.*)

How do we show we're kind? How do we show we care?

We use our words in loving ways. (*Say, "I love you!"*)

We offer a big smile. (*Point to lips and trace a big smile.*)

How do we show we're kind? How do we show we care?
(*Hold hands together over heart, then extend hands.*)

