

1 Samuel 8:4-11,(12-15),16-20,(11:14-15)

Choices and consequences

The leaders of Israel come to Samuel to ask for a king. Samuel does not think this a good idea but, after praying to God, he comes back to them with God's warning about what having a king would mean – conscripted armies, tithes and taxes. But the people insist. So, Samuel takes them all to Gilgal where they find Saul and make him their king.



Bible notes



Who was to be Israel's king? During the period of the judges, the answer was God. The judges emerged as charismatic leaders, often in times of crisis, but their authority depended on God's validation. God had called Israel to be a unique nation directly under his care, a community bound by covenant, a 'priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6). But now Israel was asking to move away from this model and be ruled by a king, 'like other nations' (v.5). They were rejecting the special status offered by God and wanted to adopt the pattern followed by their neighbours. Samuel was ageing and his sons were not suitable to take up his role. The elders of Israel recognised the possibility of a power vacuum and took steps to avoid it. Samuel was clearly opposed to this move and shared God's words of warning: a king would build a new kind of economy where the land and its produce was held centrally, and the people would be forced into forms of employment that created luxury and glory for the king and his courtiers, but left the sons and daughters of Israel demeaned and unprotected in servile roles. Yet God opted to allow the Israelites to make the choice for kingship. However, God set up a way of king-making that ensured the king was God's choice, not the people's. It was Samuel who would have responsibility for identifying Israel's king, and he would anoint him in line with God's direction. Though kingship is not God's preferred option for governing Israel, this passage describes a compromise in which God responds to the people's wishes in ways that ensure ultimate control remains where it belongs – with the Lord, with whom they are in covenant relationship.

First impressions

- Can you think of an action you have taken that has caused big ripples?
- Where was God in the decision you took?
- Are you aware of situations in the news where big decisions must be made? How might you pray for the decision-makers?



Write

Make a list of kind actions and cut them up into on separate slips of paper. Fold and place them in a bowl and then, during the week, choose a new action to do that day.

Read

Read chapter 7 of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Would the story have been different if the Sorting Hat had put Harry in Slytherin or another house?

Pray



Find a die and follow the corresponding action to the number you roll:

- One: Thank God for something that has happened this week.
- Two: Tell God about a choice you need to make.
- Three: Chat with God about how you are feeling.
- Four: Tell God about a choice or something you are worried about.
- Five: Praise God for being great.
- Six: Tell God about a choice you are looking forward to.

A prayer of adoration

Lord God, whatever age we are, you show us your love and compassion.

Whether we are new in the faith or have known you more years than we care to remember, you are there for us. Even when the consequences of our choices aren't good, you show us your mercy.

We bow to our powerful God for whom nothing is impossible. Amen.

DRAW



Create a picture of something that you will have to make a decision about over the next week. It may be a big or small decision, but either way, take time each day this week to pray that you will be guided by God over how best to make those choices.