

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

1. This week's focus is how the people of God (Israel) were invited into a relationship with God, with the King and his Kingdom Community. Still, they consistently looked for other kings (sometimes figuratively attempting to do things independently, and sometimes literally, as in 1 Samuel 8 when they demanded a king). We can find ourselves in that story by recognizing how we reject God's plan for us and instead attempt to live independently.
2. In Genesis 12, God invites Abram into a relationship with him and promises to bless Abram so that his descendants would bless all people. He was blessed to be a blessing. In 1 Samuel 8, we see that Abram's descendants, the Israelites, are rejecting a relationship with God by demanding a human king. God gives the prophet Samuel permission to grant their request but also issues a warning that the human king will not yield positive results for their community. They ignore his advice and proceed.
3. Note that Abram's obedience is remarkable! He is a great example to us. But also note God's response to the demands of the Israelites in 1 Samuel. He doesn't berate them; he simply warns them. It's okay for us to express our questions and doubts to God honestly, but we should also recognize that if we choose not to obey him, we miss out on his best of for us.
4. Encourage participants to identify ways that God might be leading them to follow him in risky ways and then identify ways the groups can support participants in obedience. Also, encourage people to identify the things they trust (their logic, the advice of "experts," their ability to make a living, etc.) to protect and guide them that AREN'T Jesus. What would it look like to reject those "kings" and follow the one true King (God)?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND QUOTES

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized?
4. Who have you been able to B.L.E.S.S.?

"The aim of God in history is the formation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God Himself as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant." - Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

"For God's purpose, as we have seen, was not to invent a production line for righteous individuals, but to create a new community of people who in their social life would embody those qualities of righteousness, peace, justice, and love that reflect God's own character and were God's original purpose for humanity." - Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God*