

General Church Education



# Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

1 Samuel 13:1-15

## Lesson 7

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is Our King

For ages 10-11

## Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

1 Samuel 13:1-15

### Teacher Background

Saul had been on the throne for two years when Jonathan attacked a Philistine garrison in Geba. Saul mobilized a fighting force of 6000 men, however the Philistines gathered 30,000 chariots and 6000 horsemen. Sensing great danger, Saul's men hid in caves, holes and pits. With his army melting away, Saul decided not to wait for Samuel to sacrifice to the Lord, but to perform the sacrifice himself. When Samuel arrived shortly after he had done this Saul made excuses for his disobedience. Sadly, Saul never completely followed the Lord's commands again. He would therefore lose the kingdom. After Samuel left, Saul found that only 600 soldiers remained with him.

Saul's breach of obedience had serious consequences. He knew that only a priest should sacrifice. Sacrificing without Samuel represents the confidence that we can live and worship without the Lord's help. Saul did not appear to truly respect or "fear" the Lord. Like children, we also need the Lord to lead and guide us.

### Focus Points

- Saul's son Jonathan attacked a Philistine garrison so the Philistines mobilized a large army.
- Saul disobeyed Samuel's instructions to wait for him to come to offer a sacrifice.
- Samuel told Saul that his kingdom would be taken from him because of his disobedience.

### Readings from the Writings

"He will deliver those who are willing to be taught and led by Him by some means of the Word." *Apocalypse Explained* 1072

"To fear," in reference to the Lord, signifies to worship in reverence, because in worship and in all things of worship there is a holy and reverential fear, which is that the Lord is to be honored and in no way injured; for it is as with children towards parents and parents towards children." *Apocalypse Explained* 696

"The true worship of God is unknown to those who think that all worship consists in acts of adoration and prayer, thus in such things as belong to the mouth and thought.... Yet the reality is that in a person offering adoration and prayer the Lord pays attention solely to his heart, that is, to what he is like inwardly so far as love and consequently faith are concerned. In short, acting in accord with the Lord's commands constitutes true worship of Him, indeed constitutes true love and true faith." *Arcana Coelestia* 10143.4,5

## Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

### Recitation

Learn the Lord's Word by heart.

“Wait on the Lord;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14)

### Projects and Activities (see back of lesson for answers)

Saul Fights the Philistines True or False?  
Complete sentences by choosing the best ending.

#### People I Trust

Samuel helped Saul make good decisions and follow the Lord. The Lord gives you special people in your life to offer guidance. Identify people you trust and write their names on hands in the picture. Label yourself as the green figure. Cut out the figure. Cut slits between the hands. Place the figure between the hands.

### Additional Project and Activity Choices

#### Decision Making Activity

Read three scenarios and three possible responses to each scenario. Circle the answer that seems the best way to handle each situation. Think about the Lord's commandments. Identify the commandments that apply to each situation. At <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-decision-making-activity-1samuel13.pdf>

#### Discussion: Notice Times when You Are Waiting

This week, encourage students to notice times when they have to wait for something to happen. Encourage them to put effort into waiting without becoming upset or frustrated. Remind them that the Lord is in control and that He always keeps the big picture in mind. Encourage them to do this yourself. Ask them if what they are waiting for will matter in an hour, a week, or even a year.

# Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

## 1 Samuel 13:1-15

### Vocabulary

**garrison**—troops stationed to defend a place or area

**gorge**—deep narrow valley with steep sides

**thicket**—dense bushes or trees

### Saul Plans to Rid Israel of the Philistines

During the first two years of Saul's reign as king enemies continued to trouble Israel. Therefore, Saul took the first step towards freeing Israel from its enemies by driving out the Philistines. He chose an army of three thousand soldiers and sent the rest of the people home. He kept two thousand fighters with him in Michmash in the mountains of Bethel, and placed a thousand troops under the command of his son Jonathan in Gibeah.

Jonathan and his soldiers attacked the Philistine garrison at Gibeah. Saul blew a trumpet to let Israel know that the battle had begun. However, Saul was not to go into battle right away. Samuel told him to gather his troops at Gilgal, and said he would come and offer sacrifices to the Lord before the battle started. They were to wait for Samuel in Gilgal for seven days

The Philistines also reported the attack and gathered a huge force to strike back. They raised thirty-thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and too many soldiers to count. There were so many that they were like the sand on the seashore. The troops marched to Michmash and positioned themselves on the north side of a steep, rocky gorge.

This enormous army was a frightening sight! The Israelites were so afraid that they hid.



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Some people even crossed the Jordan River and fled into the land of Gad!

“The people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits.” (1 Samuel 13:6)

### Saul's Impatience

Saul waited in Gilgal for seven days, but Samuel did not come. The powerful Philistine army scared the soldiers and they began to leave. Saul became impatient and decided not to wait for the priest, but to offer the burnt offering and the peace offerings himself. This was strictly forbidden. When the tabernacle was built the Lord had commanded that only a priest was to offer the sacrifice. So Saul was disobeying not only Samuel's order, but the Lord's law.

Just as Saul finished offering the sacrifice, Samuel arrived. His first words to Saul were, “What have you done?” (1 Samuel 13:11)

Has anyone ever said that to you when you have done something wrong? How did it feel? Did you want to make excuses right away?

Saul did. He said he was afraid the Philistines would attack before he could ask for the Lord's help. And his soldiers were deserting him. He said that if he did not hurry and offer the sacrifice himself he would not be strong enough to defeat the Philistines.

### Saul's Chastisement

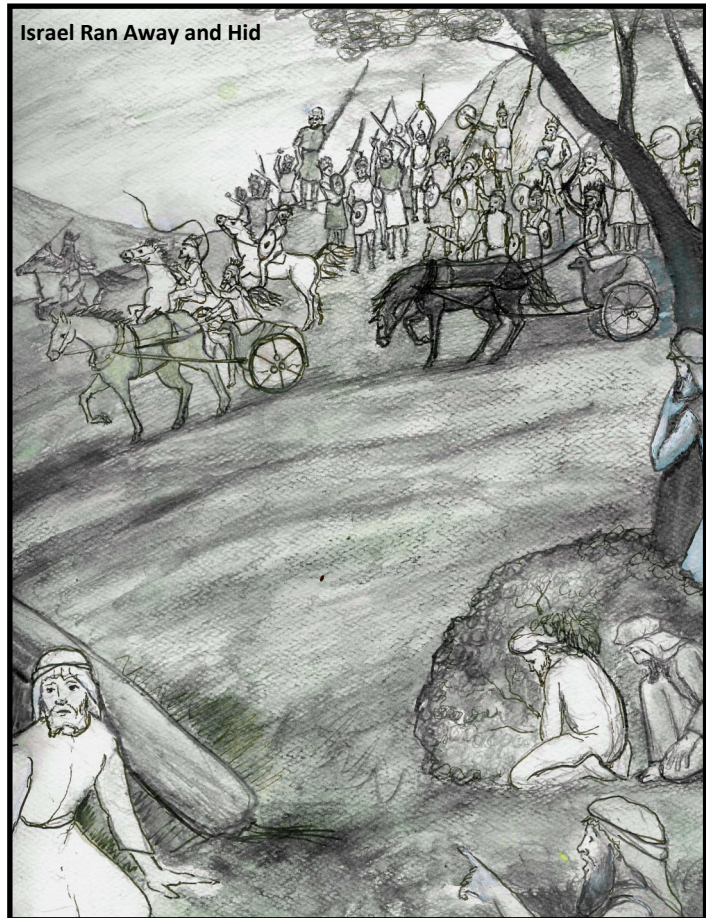
Samuel spoke strong words to Saul:

“You have done foolishly.  
You have not kept the  
commandment of the Lord  
your God which He  
commanded you.” (1 Samuel 13:13)

And Samuel traced the consequences of his disobedience!

“But now your kingdom  
shall not continue.” (1 Samuel 13:14)

Saul forgot to trust in the Lord's power to save him from his enemies. The Lord repeatedly



reminded the Israelites that He could help them if they obeyed Him. Saul appeared to mean well when he went ahead and performed the sacrifice. But he was impatient and made a serious mistake. He did not take the time to think about what he was doing.

Saul was tall and strong, but he was not wise. He should have waited for Samuel, the voice of the Lord speaking to the Israelites. He would have guided Saul wisely. Sadly, from this point forward, Saul would never completely follow the Lord's commands again. It is because of this that he would lose the kingdom and the Lord would choose another king.

“The Lord has sought a man for Himself after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people.” (1 Samuel 13:14)

### Saul's Kingdom Weakens

After chastising Saul, Samuel left and went back to Gibeah. Saul counted the remaining soldiers. There were only about six hundred soldiers left. Remember, he had started with three thousand men. So Saul's kingdom was slipping away from him just as Samuel had warned:

“But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.” (1 Samuel 12:25)



### Waiting for Samuel

Are you wondering why Saul would lose his kingdom for making a sacrifice to the Lord? Does this seem like a harsh consequence for something that seems to be good?

The Lord's command that only a priest should offer the sacrifice reminded the Israelites that they needed the Lord's help to live and worship in a good way. Saul's decision to do it himself is like deciding he didn't need the Lord.

Saul's choice is like being asked to do something in a specific way by an adult and deciding you want to do it differently. You might have felt that you had good reasons, the adult was displeased. Caring adults usually have good reasons for giving the instructions they do. Perhaps they want you to be safe, or to learn a new skill. If you do it your way things might be fine, but you could get hurt or miss out on something useful.

## Activity Overview

### Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Wait on the Lord;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14)

### Projects and Activities (answers are at the back of this lesson)

Choose one or two.

Saul Fights the Philistines True or False?

Read statements about Saul fighting the Philistines and decide if they are true or false.

People I Trust

Do a project about the people who offer to give you guidance and support you in making good decisions.

## Saul Fights the Philistines True or False?

### 1 Samuel 13

Read each statement carefully. Decide if it is true or false. Put a T or F on the line before the statement. You might find it helpful to read 1 Samuel 13 as you answer the questions.

1. \_\_\_\_ Saul was an experienced ruler who used good judgment.
2. \_\_\_\_ Saul chose a large army to fight against the Philistines.
3. \_\_\_\_ Saul put Jonathan in charge of one thousand soldiers in Michmash.
4. \_\_\_\_ The Philistines learned that Jonathan had attacked their garrison.
5. \_\_\_\_ Saul wisely called the people to Gilgal to discuss the attack.
6. \_\_\_\_ Samuel told Saul to wait until he came to sacrifice to the Lord before going into battle.
7. \_\_\_\_ Samuel said that he would be there to offer sacrifices in 14 days.
8. \_\_\_\_ The Philistine army was so big that the Israelites didn't know how many soldiers they had.
9. \_\_\_\_ The children of Israel were so afraid of the Philistines that they all fled across the Jordan River to the land of Gad.
10. \_\_\_\_ Saul waited for seven days for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice.
11. \_\_\_\_ Saul was afraid that the Philistines would leave before he got the chance to attack them.
12. \_\_\_\_ Saul would eventually lose his kingdom because he disobeyed the Lord.
13. \_\_\_\_ Obeying the Lord is the most important decision we can make in this life on earth.



## People I Trust

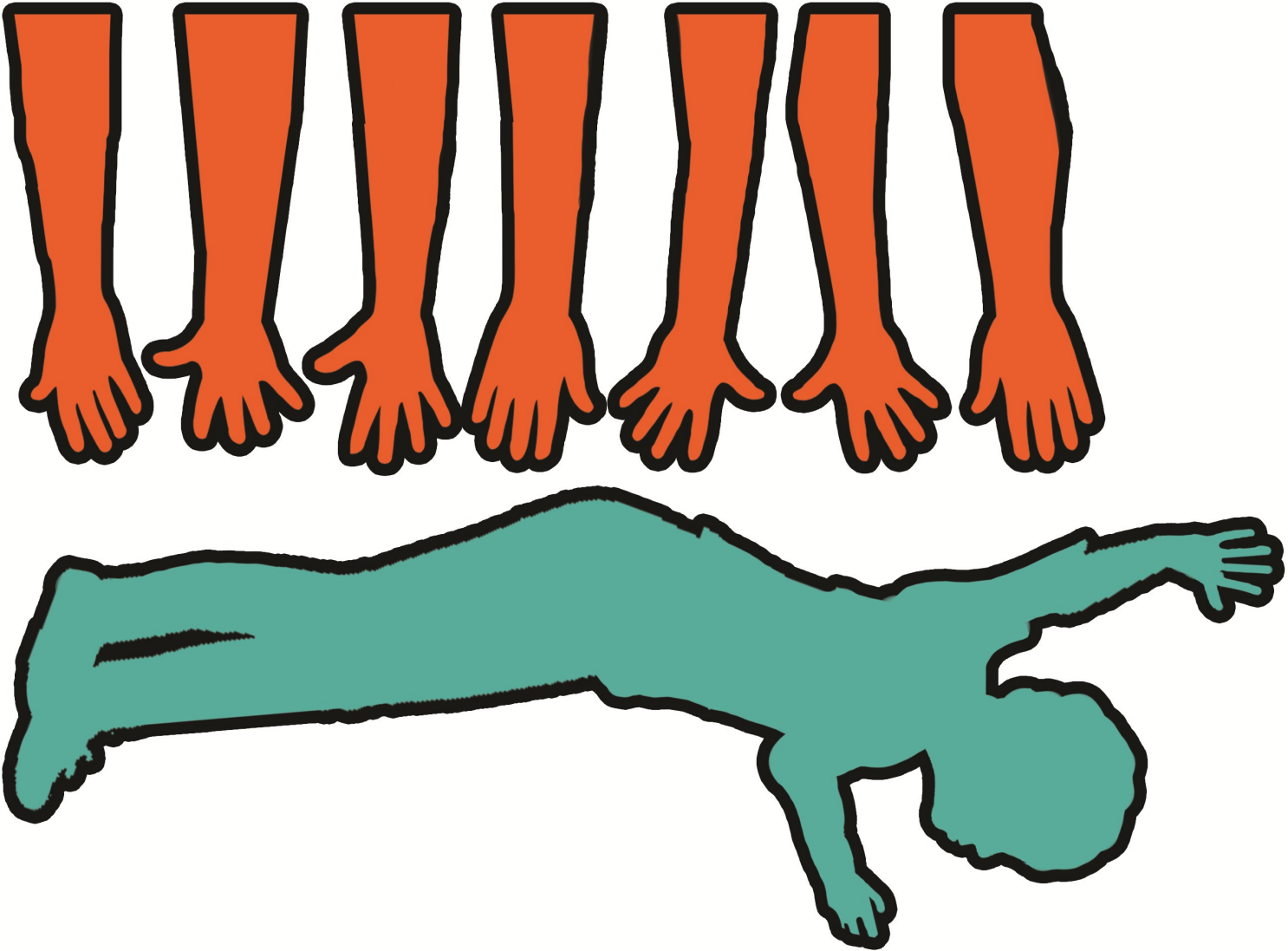
1 Samuel 13

The Prophet Samuel helped King Saul make good decisions and follow the Lord. The Lord gives you special people in your life to offer you guidance.

1. Think of people you can trust to help you make good decisions. Write their names on the hands in the picture on the next page.
2. Label the green figure as yourself.
3. Cut out the green figure.
4. Cut slits between the hands.
5. Place the green figure between the hands as shown below to show how the people you trust support you.



# People I Trust



# Answers

## Lesson 7

Saul Fights the Philistines True or False?

1. F, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. T, 10. F, 11. F, 12. T, 13. T.