

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 5: Saul Anointed and Made King

1 Samuel 9:1–10:27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The aim of this lesson is to let the class watch God raise up Saul through ordinary providence (the lost donkeys), to admire the genuine humility of Saul's early days, and to feel the bright promise of his beginning: the secret anointing, the confirming signs, the new heart, and the Spirit coming upon him. Help the class see how God threads His purposes through everyday details and how He equips those He calls. At the same time, plant the central tension of the whole study, that outward stature is not the measure of a man, for the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), and that a strong beginning is not yet a faithful ending.

Handle the doctrine carefully and in church-of-Christ fashion. The Spirit coming upon Saul (10:6, 10) is an Old Covenant empowering for a task, not the indwelling promised to baptized believers under the New Covenant (Acts 2:38); do not read New Testament specifics anachronistically into Saul's experience. Yet the principle holds for our instruction (Romans 15:4): God equips those He calls, and being equipped does not guarantee perseverance. Use Saul gently as a sober warning that one can begin under God's blessing and still depart (Hebrews 3:12–14), which both honors the c-of-C conviction that Christians can fall away and sets up the lessons to come.

Keep the application warm and personal. Press humility, trust in God's quiet providence, and the resolve to follow through on the calling and place God has assigned, however small it feels.

Question 1

Student Question:

Saul's path to kingship begins with a search for lost donkeys (9:3–4). What does this ordinary errand reveal about how God works His providence through the everyday details of our lives?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The story of Israel's first king opens not with grandeur but with a chore: “the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses” (9:3). Saul sets out on a frustrating, fruitless search across the hill country, the kind of ordinary errand that fills most of our days. He has no idea he is walking toward a throne.

This is one of Scripture's clearest pictures of providence. God does not skywrite His plans. He works through lost animals, a servant's suggestion, a chance remark about a seer in the next town. Every turn that feels like coincidence is quietly steered. By the time Saul reaches Samuel,

we realize the donkeys were never the point; they were the leash by which God drew Saul to the place of his anointing.

We rarely see this in the moment. The detour, the delay, the dead-end errand, the conversation we almost did not have, these are the threads God weaves into a purpose we only recognize later. Joseph could say of years of apparent accident, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20).

For our instruction (Romans 15:4), this guards us against two errors: despising the ordinary as if God were absent from it, and demanding the dramatic as if God only worked in the spectacular. Most of God's leading comes disguised as an ordinary Tuesday.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's providence operates through ordinary, even frustrating, daily events (9:3–4).
- What looks like coincidence is often God's quiet steering.
- We usually recognize God's leading only in hindsight.
- Providence guards us from despising the ordinary and from demanding the spectacular.
- God works good purposes even through apparent detours (Genesis 50:20).

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you later seen God's hand in something that felt like a random detour?
- How does believing in providence change the way you face an ordinary day?
- Why are we tempted to look for God only in the dramatic?

Question 2

Student Question:

Saul was reluctant to keep searching for fear of worrying his father (9:5). What does this small detail show about Saul's character, and where in your own life does considerate, ordinary faithfulness need to grow?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

A small line says a great deal: as the search drags on, Saul says, “Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us” (9:5). He is not worried about the inconvenience to himself; he is worried about worrying his father. It is a thoughtful, considerate impulse, the kind of quiet decency that reveals what a person is really like.

Character shows up in details like this, long before any throne or test. The way we treat our parents, the way we think of someone else's anxiety before our own, the small courtesies no one is watching, these are the true tells of the heart. Saul's early portrait includes a son who cared about his father's peace of mind.

Jesus taught that faithfulness is proven in the small things: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). The habits we build in ordinary considerateness are the soil in which larger faithfulness grows, or fails to grow.

It is worth pausing on this tenderly, because the later Saul becomes a man consumed with himself, jealous, image-obsessed, willing to harm others to protect his standing. The contrast is a warning: early good instincts must be cultivated, or they wither. Considerate faithfulness in small things is not automatic; it must be guarded and grown.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Character reveals itself in small, ordinary details (9:5).
- Considering others before ourselves is a mark of a healthy heart.
- Faithfulness in little things prepares us for faithfulness in much (Luke 16:10).
- Early good instincts must be cultivated or they wither over time.
- How we treat family in private discloses our true character.

Discussion Prompts

- What do your private, ordinary courtesies reveal about your heart?
- Where is God asking you to grow in considerate faithfulness toward family?
- Why is faithfulness in small things a reliable indicator of larger character?

Question 3

Student Question:

Samuel had been told by the Lord the day before that Saul was coming (9:15–17). What does this reveal about God's sovereignty and foreknowledge even in events that seem like coincidence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Behind the human errand runs a divine appointment. The day before Saul arrived, “the Lord had told Samuel in his ear... To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel” (9:15–16). What looked to Saul like a wandering search was, to God, a scheduled meeting He had arranged in advance.

This is the marvel of God's foreknowledge. He is never caught off guard, never improvising. While Saul was deciding which valley to search next, God was already telling Samuel to expect him by a certain hour. The two threads, human freedom and divine purpose, are woven together without contradiction. Saul truly chose his steps; God truly governed the outcome.

Scripture holds these together throughout. “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). We make real decisions, and over them all stands a God

who sees the end from the beginning. This is not fatalism, as if our choices were a charade; it is the deeper comfort that our genuine choices unfold within His sure purpose.

For the believer, this is steadying. The God who arranged Saul's arrival to the hour is the God who orders our days. We are not adrift in chance. The appointments that matter most are often the ones He has scheduled that we never saw coming.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's foreknowledge governs events that appear accidental to us (9:15–16).
- Human choices and divine purpose work together without contradiction.
- God is never caught off guard or forced to improvise.
- This is providence, not fatalism; our choices are real (Proverbs 16:9).
- The God who ordered Saul's day orders ours as well.

Discussion Prompts

- How does God's foreknowledge bring you comfort rather than anxiety?
- How do you hold together your real choices and God's sure purpose?
- Why is providence different from fatalism?

Question 4

Student Question:

When told of his coming honor, Saul protested that he was from the smallest tribe and least family (9:21). How does genuine humility about ourselves prepare us to be used by God, and where do you need it most?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When Samuel begins to hint at Saul's coming honor, Saul recoils: "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (9:21). Benjamin was the smallest tribe, nearly wiped out in the days of the Judges, and Saul counts his own family the least within it. He genuinely does not see himself as kingly material.

This early humility is real and lovely. Saul is not fishing for compliments; he is honestly bewildered that God would choose him. And that posture, lowliness in one's own eyes, is exactly the soil God loves to plant in. He chose a stammering Moses, a youngest-son David, a fishermen's band of apostles. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Humility prepares a person to be used because it keeps the glory where it belongs. The one who knows he is least is less likely to imagine he succeeds by his own greatness. The danger, which

Saul will later illustrate, is that early humility can curdle into pride once honor arrives and is not guarded by ongoing dependence on God.

There is a tender lesson here for every reader who feels small, overlooked, from the least family in the least tribe. That is no obstacle to God; it may be the very reason He chooses you, so that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saul's early humility was genuine and God-honoring (9:21).
- God delights to choose the weak and lowly (1 Corinthians 1:27).
- Humility keeps glory with God and prepares us to be used.
- Feeling small is no barrier to God's call; it can be the reason for it.
- Early humility must be guarded, lest honor turn it into pride.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you feel like the least, and how might God use even that?
- How does humility prepare a person to be useful to God?
- Why is it dangerous to let honor erode an early humility?

Question 5

Student Question:

Samuel anointed Saul privately and gave him signs to confirm the call (10:1–9). Why does God confirm His word and His callings, and how does He give us assurance today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Samuel anoints Saul privately, “Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him” (10:1), and then gives him a series of confirming signs: men he will meet, news he will hear, prophets he will encounter (10:2–7). God does not leave Saul wondering whether the call was real; He stacks up evidence so the young man can walk forward in assurance.

This is characteristic of God. He confirms His word. He gave Gideon a fleece, Moses signs before Pharaoh, and supremely He confirmed the gospel by raising Jesus from the dead and by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). God does not ask blind credulity; He gives grounds for confident faith.

For us, the confirmation is not a string of personal predictive signs but the settled, finished word of God, the Scriptures, confirmed by the resurrection and sealed in the apostolic witness. “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31). Our assurance rests not on private omens but on God's revealed and reliable word.

It is worth noting that even with all this confirmation, Saul would not finally persevere. Assurance of calling is a gift, but it does not run the race for us. God confirms; we must still follow. The signs were meant to launch a life of obedience, not to substitute for it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God confirms His word and callings so His people can walk in assurance (10:1–7).
- God gives grounds for faith rather than demanding blind credulity (Acts 1:3).
- Our assurance rests on the confirmed, written word of God (John 20:31).
- Confirmation launches obedience but does not replace it.
- Even a clearly called person must still choose to follow faithfully.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you ground your assurance of God's word and call today?
- Why does God give us grounds for faith rather than demanding blind belief?
- How can assurance of calling become an excuse rather than a launching point?

Question 6

Student Question:

The text says God “gave him another heart” and the Spirit came upon him (10:9–10). When have you experienced God changing you and equipping you for something beyond your natural ability?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

As Saul turns to leave Samuel, “God gave him another heart” (10:9), and shortly after, “the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied” (10:10) so that those who knew him were astonished. God did not send Saul to an enormous task with only his natural resources; He changed him and empowered him for the role.

We should read this carefully and not anachronistically. Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit came upon chosen individuals to equip them for specific tasks, judges, prophets, kings. This is not the same as the indwelling of the Spirit promised to baptized believers under the New Covenant (Acts 2:38). Yet the principle stands for our instruction (Romans 15:4): God equips those He calls. He does not summon us to a work and then abandon us to our own strength.

Every believer can testify to some version of this, the courage that arrived when it was needed, the words given in a hard conversation, the patience that was not native to us, the love for a difficult person that we could not have manufactured. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

The encouragement is plain: when God calls you to something beyond your natural ability, look to Him to supply what the calling requires. He is in the business of changing hearts and equipping the called. Our part is to step out trusting that He will furnish what He requires.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God equips those He calls, supplying what the task requires (10:9–10).
- The Spirit's coming upon Saul was Old Covenant empowering for a task, not the New Covenant indwelling (Acts 2:38).
- God does not call us and then leave us to our own strength.
- Believers experience God working in them to will and to do (Philippians 2:13).
- We should step into God-given tasks trusting Him to furnish what they require.

Discussion Prompts

- When has God equipped you for something beyond your natural ability?
- How does knowing God equips the called free you to step out in faith?
- Why must we be careful not to read New Testament Spirit-indwelling into Saul's experience?

Question 7

Student Question:

Saul was “turned into another man” by the Spirit (10:6), yet later fell away. What does this teach about the difference between being equipped by God and remaining faithful to God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the somber undercurrent of the whole chapter. Saul was given another heart and turned into another man by the Spirit of God (10:6, 9), and yet, as the larger story unfolds, he does not persevere. He begins under God's blessing and ends in jealousy, disobedience, and ruin. The gap between being equipped by God and remaining faithful to God is one of the most important lessons in all of Samuel.

Being used by God is not the same as walking with God to the end. Saul had the anointing, the signs, the Spirit, the public acclaim, and still he fell. This shatters the comfortable assumption that a strong start, or even genuine divine equipping, guarantees a faithful finish. It does not.

Scripture warns the New Covenant believer in exactly these terms: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God... if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:12–14). The Christian can fall away. Equipping is grace; perseverance is also required of us by grace.

So Saul stands as a sober mirror. The question is never merely, has God blessed and used me? but, am I still walking with Him today, and will I hold fast to the end? Gifts and good beginnings are wonderful, but it is faithful endurance that crowns a life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Being equipped by God is not the same as remaining faithful to God.
- A strong start, even genuine divine empowering, does not guarantee a faithful finish.
- The believer can depart from the living God and must hold fast to the end (Hebrews 3:12-14).
- Saul stands as a sober warning against presuming on past blessing.
- Faithful endurance, not merely gifting, crowns a life.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is a strong beginning no guarantee of a faithful ending?
- How does Hebrews 3:12-14 apply this warning to us today?
- What helps a person keep walking with God year after year?

Question 8

Student Question:

When the kingdom was chosen by lot, Saul had hidden himself among the stuff (10:22). What might his hiding reveal, and where do you tend to hide from a calling or responsibility God has placed before you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

On the public day of choosing, when the lot finally falls to Saul, he is nowhere to be found. "When they sought him, he could not be found... Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff" (10:21-22). The man who will be king is crouching among the baggage. It is an oddly endearing and revealing moment.

We can read it kindly, as the shyness of a humble man overwhelmed by a calling too big for him. And there is something to that. But it also foreshadows a pattern in Saul, a tendency to shrink from the hard center of responsibility, to manage appearances rather than face the weight head on. Hiding among the stuff is comfortable; standing in the open to be chosen is frightening.

We know the impulse. God places a calling before us, a service to take up, a wrong to address, a word to speak, and we find a reason to be busy among the baggage instead. We hide in distraction, in busyness, in self-doubt that masquerades as humility. The calling stands; we crouch.

The grace of the moment is that God knew exactly where Saul was, “the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself.” You cannot finally hide from the God who calls you. Sooner or later, the calling finds you and asks whether you will stand up and answer it, or stay among the stuff.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saul hid from his calling on the day of choosing (10:21–22).
- Hiding may look like humility but can mask avoidance of responsibility.
- We often retreat into busyness or self-doubt to dodge a calling.
- God knows exactly where we hide; we cannot finally escape His call.
- A calling stands before us whether or not we step forward to answer it.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you hiding from a responsibility or calling God has placed before you?
- How can false humility become an excuse to avoid obedience?
- What would it look like to step out from among the stuff and answer?

Question 9

Student Question:

Some sons of Belial despised Saul and brought him no presents, “but he held his peace” (10:27). What does the whole chapter teach about God choosing and equipping leaders, and how a promising beginning must still be matched by ongoing faithfulness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter closes on a mixed note. Most of the people rejoice and a band of valiant men whose hearts God had touched go with Saul, but “the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace” (10:27). Even from the start, the new king meets both loyalty and contempt, and he wisely lets the insults pass.

Step back and survey the whole chapter, and a clear truth emerges: God chooses and equips His leaders. The providence that found Saul, the anointing, the signs, the new heart, the Spirit, the public lot, all of it underscores that Saul's rise was God's doing, not Saul's ambition. Leadership among God's people is a stewardship received, not a prize seized.

And yet the chapter is shadowed by what we already know is coming. Every gift Saul received, he would eventually squander. This is the heavy doctrinal weight of the lesson: a promising, even God-given, beginning must be matched by ongoing faithfulness, or it ends in tragedy. The same God who equips also calls us to endure (Hebrews 3:14).

For the church, this carries straight into how we think about elders, preachers, teachers, and every servant Christ raises up. God still chooses and equips. But the called must keep walking,

and the people must support rather than despise those God has set before them. A good beginning is a gift to be guarded with a lifetime of faithfulness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God chooses and equips the leaders of His people (the whole chapter).
- Leadership among God's people is a stewardship received, not a prize seized.
- A God-given beginning must be matched by ongoing faithfulness.
- Saul met both loyalty and contempt and wisely held his peace (10:27).
- The principle of God equipping yet requiring endurance carries into the church today (Hebrews 3:14).

Discussion Prompts

- How does seeing leadership as a stewardship change the way we view it?
- Why must a God-given beginning be matched by lifelong faithfulness?
- How should we treat the leaders God raises up among His people?

Question 10

Student Question:

Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this passage, whether in humility, in trusting God's providence, or in the resolve to follow through faithfully on the calling He has given you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Saul's anointing leaves us looking past Saul to the One every anointed king foreshadowed. The word Messiah and the word Christ both mean anointed one. Saul was anointed with oil and given the Spirit for a task, and he failed; Jesus is the Anointed One in whom every promise holds, who was full of the Spirit without measure and obeyed faithfully unto death (John 3:34; Philippians 2:8). Where Saul shrank and fell, Christ stood and finished.

So this passage forms us by both invitation and warning. It invites us, like the young Saul, into humility, into trust in God's quiet providence, into willingness to be equipped for tasks beyond us. And it warns us, by Saul's later collapse, that we must follow through, holding fast to the end (Hebrews 3:14). Jesus is forming in His people not only good beginnings but enduring faithfulness.

Consider where you are in your own walk. Are you trusting God's providence in an ordinary, frustrating season? Are you owning your smallness humbly rather than hiding among the stuff? Are you stepping into a calling God has equipped you for, or shrinking from it? The Spirit who changed Saul's heart is, for the baptized believer, given to dwell within (Acts 2:38), to make us actually like Christ.

Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this lesson, perhaps a fresh humility, a deeper trust in His unseen hand, or a resolve to answer a calling and follow through faithfully. The goal is not merely to admire Saul's bright start or mourn his sad end, but to become, by grace, the kind of person who both begins and ends in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saul, the anointed who failed, points to Christ, the Anointed One who obeyed (John 3:34; Philippians 2:8).
- The passage forms us toward humility, trust in providence, and willingness to be equipped.
- It warns us, through Saul, to follow through and hold fast to the end (Hebrews 3:14).
- The Spirit given to baptized believers works to make us like Christ (Acts 2:38).
- The goal is to be the kind of person who both begins and ends in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How is Jesus the faithful Anointed One that Saul could only foreshadow?
- Which is God growing in you now, humility, trust in providence, or follow-through?
- Name one specific way Christ is forming you through this passage.