

Bible Study Teaching Plan for April 8, 2018  
Lesson 5: "The Results of a Rash Decision," I Samuel 13:1-14  
By Dr. Williamson

CREATE INTEREST

1. (write on marker board before class) -- "Wisdom is the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment." (Online dictionary).

SAY: We all want to make "wise" decisions in life. Our jobs demand (or hope) that we make wise decisions. Parents want to make wise decisions in bringing up children. Parents hope their children make wise decisions. When we use social media, we need to use wise judgement in knowing what to post, and what NOT to post.

ASK: How do you to teach someone else, like your children or grand-children, to make wise choices? Discuss.

Possible answers: You draw on your past experiences (often of failure) to try and warn others of not making the same missteps or mistakes.

2. SAY: A proverb is a wise teaching or word of advice. Here's one on being wise: "A smart person learns from their *own mistakes*. A wise person learns from the *mistakes of others*, so you don't copy or repeat their errors."

SAY: Let's take an example of learning from experience and the mistakes of others. How would we know if alcohol use would lead to alcoholism (or not)? Discuss.

READ (From the Recovery Village website): "Alcoholism has no one single cause. Rather, it is a detailed combination of genetic markers and environmental precursors all mixed together. There is definitely a hereditary role in the development of alcohol dependence, but no alcohol addiction gene has ever been isolated. Having a parent who is an alcoholic makes you four times more likely to be one yourself, per the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Likewise, environmental factors are part of the mix, too. Growing up in a household where alcohol is prevalent also ups the risk of alcoholism in your future."

3. ASK: What are some things you wish you could "do over" based on past decisions or in-decisions in the following areas:

OR ALTERNATIVELY, "What is the best advice you've ever received in these areas?" (choose one or two categories from the following list that fit your class) and have group give their "advice."

Financial decisions: (i.e. buying a house, car, or stocks)

Repairs or attempted repairs:

Growing older (aging):

Weight Loss or Physical Fitness:

Christian living:

Career choices:

4. SAY: We all have regrets from the past. However the goal today is not to bring sadness or despair from past actions, but rather to learn to make wise decisions, including going to God for direction. Today's Bible study looks at what happens when we omit God from our decision making process, and trusting God even when we don't understand.

#### GUIDE BIBLE STUDY

5. Have volunteers read 1 Samuel 13:1 from several translations. Note the differences:

New American says "Saul was 40 years old when he began to reign..."

NIV says "Saul was 30 years old when he became king..."

KJV says "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel..."

SAY: Notice the [brackets] in the NIV, and the footnotes in the NASB. The KJV is actually the closest to the oldest Masoretic Hebrew text. However when you look at the events that happened in Saul's reign, it cannot be squeezed into 2 years. Also, the way the Hebrew is written, the number "two" is usually the second number in a two-number sequence. From the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes in Acts 13:21 that Saul reigned 40 years. The reason for this discrepancy is the actual numbers are missing from the oldest texts, so we don't know the best English translation is. Translators have done their best. With that said, no matter what translation we use, we have what we need to understand what God is trying to teach and convey in this passage. It's an example of "having to trust God when we don't understand."

6. Have volunteer read vs. 2-4. SAY: At this time in the history of Israel, the Israelites are inexperienced at being under the authority of a human king. They have been and still are tribal groups, which come together when there is a need. The Ammonites attacked Israel, recorded in Chapter 11, and Saul, under God's guidance and with God's help, led the Israelites to defeat the Ammonites. As a result, the people of Israel confirmed Saul as their king. Now in Chapter 13, it is the Philistines who are moving in to attack the Israelites. And they are armed and dangerous, having iron weapons and chariots. The Israelites have NONE of these weapons.

7. Have volunteer read vs. 5-7. SAY: The Israelites were outnumbered in terms of people, and they were at a disadvantage in terms of technology and weapons. As a result, many Israelites fled or hid in fear.

ASK: How does fear affect our decision making? (Discuss. ASK: How does fear effect the financial decisions we make?; or protection decisions?)

SAY: Satan is the father of lies and the one who introduces fear into our lives. Satan wants us to be afraid. He knows we don't make wise decisions when we are afraid. Have someone read John 8:42-47. Later, the Apostle John writes to Christians, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

8. SAY: Fear causes us to make all kinds of bad decisions. It's one of Satan's tricks. And it happened to the Israelites. Not only did Saul's troops begin to desert him, but Saul himself succumbed to fear. Have volunteer read verses 7-9.

SAY: Saul had hoped Samuel would come and set things right. In those days and culture, they thought a "prophet's presence ensured God's attention." But where was Samuel? Saul was afraid, and rightfully so. And he began thinking of the best decisions he could do on his own, sort of like we do today. We

want to fix things on our own. Or we look at our options and make the most rational or logical decision we can.

ASK: Has anyone ever experienced consequences of making a decision without asking God? And are you willing to briefly share what happened? (Teacher should have an illustration from your life you can share in case no one else does.)

9. Have class turn to page 61 (in the Regular size Print Bible Commentary) to the section entitled, "A Desperate Resort." Take turns reading aloud, starting at the third paragraph, which begins: "During Israel's years of wilderness wanderings, God allowed the people periods of encampment... [Through the End of that section, on page 62.]

SAY: Saul decided to act on his own, like the other pagan rulers around him. He tried to be warrior, priest, and king. While it looks like a fairly rational decision, Saul was NOT worshipping Yahweh. Saul was only trying to take care of himself by bribing God with an offering. It was the worst decision Saul could make. And Saul made this decision on his own, in a time of fear.

SAY: If Saul had waited and held firm--having faith over fear--Saul's story would have ended differently.

10. SAY: It's a fine line of trusting God in the midst of every day decisions: We don't want to be paralyzed by fear, but we also should never run ahead of God's plan.

#### APPLY TO LIFE

ASK: How have you learned to "wait on God" when you've needed to make a decision? Discuss.

OR: How would you give guidance in this area to your child or to a new believer in Jesus? Discuss.

11. SAY: On the surface, it looked like Saul was making a prudent decision. Some of us might say we would have done the exact same thing had we been in Saul's shoes. However, that's exactly when Samuel showed up with God's direction. Have volunteer read vs. 10-14.

READ: "Saul went through the motions of loving God. He offered sacrifices and called on God's name. But Saul's heart was not fully committed to God's lordship. Saul, the king, failed to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5)."

SAY: God needed Israel's king to be a man who was completely devoted to Him. And God needs us to be the exact same way: Completely devoted to Him. That is not saying we have to be a perfect or sinless, because we can't be. But we need to seek God with all of our heart. We need to trust God in any and every circumstance and decision, even when we don't fully understand. When we keep God first in our thoughts, and in our prayers, and in our actions, we experience His peace and direction for life. Saul lacked that desire and passion for God, and it cost him having a royal lineage.

12. ASK: What actions should we consider, based on what we've read and learned today? Discuss.