

Unexpected Leadership

Changes in leadership can be accompanied by anxiety and uncertainty, both in public life and church life. Saul, Israel's own choice for king, ultimately disobeyed God. Change in leadership was needed. Israel's next king would be one of God's choosing, and God's choice would surprise everyone. God, we are told, looks to the content of the heart, not external qualities. Are we willing to embrace unlikely leaders? Can we worship an unpredictable God?

Focus scripture: 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13

God regrets allowing Saul to become Israel's first king and solves the problem by providing for a new king. This time, the people would not get a vote. The process for selecting as well as the result would surprise everyone. God looks beyond superficial attributes and sees deep into the heart.

That God had regrets about allowing Saul to become king is surprising in and of itself. Surprising, too, that God provides a pretext for Samuel's visit with the people of Bethlehem so as not to arouse Saul's anger or suspicion. A pattern emerges: God is always faithful and remains engaged with God's people, but not always in predictable ways.

One by one, God evaluates seven of Jesse's sons in search of Israel's next king and rejects them all. The exterior – skin colour, ethnicity, age, gender – can sway decisions when we hire people or invite others to join our cause. God does not use physical characteristics, birth order, or other standard criteria. The core of one's character and intentions is what matters to God. Samuel anoints the almost overlooked young person, David.

That God chooses unexpected leaders says as much about the nature of God as it does about the qualifications of the people God calls. Who might we overlook when choosing leaders because we stereotype and prejudge?

Are we willing to be the unexpected leader to answer an unexpected call? Though often frightening, we need not fear. **Psalm 20** affirms that God is with us. Those who trust in God's provision live strong and joyful lives.

2 Corinthians 5:6–10, (11–13) 14–17 reminds us that we live with confidence, trusting that Christ's death and resurrection assure us a purpose higher than that of our own limited capabilities – we are made new in Christ. Old ways of understanding are gone. We live not just for ourselves, but for Christ; Christ's love urges us on.

Mark 4:26–34 Jesus tells the parable of the tiny mustard seed to reveal God's surprising, unexpected plan to use even small communities of faith to accomplish God's will.

Similarly, God used David, the youngest in his family, to accomplish God's will. God's realm may seem unattainable at times, but Jesus assures us that it is alive – growing and spreading even from small acts of faith until everyone finds a home in it.

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Leadership is not an end unto itself. If it is, then we need to carefully examine our motivation for wanting it or running from it, especially if we see that God is the one calling us to lead. When unexpected authority is given to us or placed into our midst, what can we do to understand better how this might be part of God's plan?



Focus scripture
1 Samuel 15:34—
16:13

Additional scriptures
Psalm 20
2 Corinthians 5:6–10,
(11–13), 14–17
Mark 4:26–34

 *Seasons of the Spirit*
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the *Revised*
Common Lectionary.

**Yes, no, maybe,
not now, who –
me? How will we
answer when you
call us to leader-
ship, Holy One?
Whatever our
answer may be,
may we come to
it knowing you
will equip us and
guide us through
every step of the
journey. Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Children often enjoy being chosen to do a particular task. Younger children take their responsibilities seriously when asked to be a class helper at school or to look after a younger sibling at home. Older children often enjoy being chosen for leadership roles and appreciate having the opportunity to do tasks that affirm their abilities and skills. The story of how young David was chosen for a particular task will connect with these experiences in the children's lives. Most children have had experiences of being the youngest or the smallest in a group, so they may especially appreciate a story about the youngest child in a family being chosen for the most important job in the country. Some may have also had the experience of being an unexpected choice when a coach or teacher or

parent sees something inside them that others may not yet see.

This week's story may raise other issues. Some children in your group may have experienced the pain of not being chosen for a task or a sports team and will identify with the brothers in the story. It is important to emphasize that God could see in David the special skills and talents that would equip David for the task of being king. The story of Samuel and David provides an opportunity for the children to discover that they too have been chosen to do God's work in the world, and to affirm that they have something significant to offer their communities. Pray that the children in your group will come to a fuller understanding of God's call in their lives.

Prepare

Before the session

- Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13, and [biblical background material](#) (p. 19).
- Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- Bring a small bell or "singing bowl."
- Bring, if possible, "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Engage

- Bring copies of this week's resource sheet "[Chosen by God](#)."
- Chant group:** chant "We Are Amazing" (on resource sheet "[Session Resources](#)," p. 118) and rhythm instruments.

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- Puzzle zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Word Search](#)"
- Craft zone:** small paper bags, sheets of coloured tissue paper, baby oil, essential oils or fresh herbs, small glass jars with tight-fitting lids
- Prayer zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Making a Prayer Book](#)," construction paper
- Art zone:** lengths of mural paper, art supplies, yarn

Bless

- Bring resource sheet "[Sign Language](#)" (p. 117)
- Bring, if possible, "Teach Me Wisdom" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



Unexpected Leadership

Scripture

1 Samuel
15:34—16:13

FOCUS To hear through a story about David that God knows us deep inside

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

Call to gather Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather in the worship space. Invite a child to light the candle. Point out the green cloth, the colour for the Season after Pentecost. It reminds us of growing – both in the natural world and in our own lives.

Sing, if possible, “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Pray the following prayer, inviting group members to repeat each line after you:

O God, thank you
for this time to be together.
Thank you for this time to learn more
about you and your people. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to imagine that they have an important message to send to someone. Ask for volunteers to mime ways to send messages and have others guess how they are sending the message.

■ **If you wanted to get a message out to a whole community or the world, what ways could you use?**

Suggest that they listen for a special message from God in the Bible story today.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Samuel. Remind children that Samuel was a famous prophet and judge who helped the people of Israel and their kings. Recall that in last week’s story Samuel anointed a man named Saul as the first king of Israel. Anointing someone with oil meant that they had been chosen to do something important. Everyone thought that Saul was a good choice as king. But as the years went by Saul was not doing a good job of leading the people.

The Bible story

Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Chosen by God](#).” Invite volunteers for the roles of God, Samuel, an Elder, Jesse, and David to read the script based on **1 Samuel 15:34—16:13**. Encourage the children to share their thoughts and comments about the story using the following questions:

- **I wonder how God spoke to Samuel?**
- **What was Samuel’s first response to God’s message?**
- **How do you think David felt when Samuel anointed him?**
- **What do you think David’s parents thought about this?**
- **What do you think David’s brothers said?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Chant group God knew that David would be a good king. God can also see deep inside us, and knows what we can do. Lead the children in the chant "We Are Amazing" (p. 118) and invite them to use rhythm instruments to accompany the words. Practice the chant a few times together, and talk about some of the "amazing" things that group members can do.

Discussion group *(for older children)* Invite the children to imagine that it is many years later, after David was chosen king. He has been king for a long time and he is remembering what life was like when he was a shepherd boy. What do you think he misses about being a shepherd? What do you think he enjoys about being a king?

Reporting Ring the bell or "singing bowl" as a signal to gather as a whole group again. Invite the chant group to perform "We Are Amazing" and the discussion group to share their responses to the questions.

The Bible story and us

God can see beyond what people look like on the outside and knows us deep inside.

■ **What do you think it means that God "looks on the heart"?**

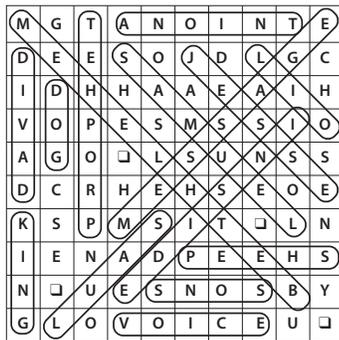
God knows the special skills that we have. We are all chosen by God and God has special plans for each of us.

■ **What are some things that can help us know what God wants us to do?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

□ **Puzzle zone: Word search** *(for younger children)* Samuel had a special message for David. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Word Search." Discuss how the words in the list relate to today's story. After completing the word search invite children to find the remaining letters and rearrange them to spell out the special message. (Answer: God has chosen you.)



□ **Craft zone: Blessing bags** Samuel anointed David with oil to show that one day David would be a special king. Oil can remind us that we are special too. Provide small paper bags for the children to decorate with the message "You are special to God" and line with tissue paper. Help children pour baby oil in their jars, add a few drops of essential oil or fresh herbs, and seal the lids tightly. Have them shake the mixture well and place the jars in their decorated bags. Suggest that the children give the jar of oil to people who would appreciate the reminder that they are special to God.

□ **Prayer zone: Prayer books** *(for older children)* Samuel's prayers helped him listen to God. Our prayers can help us discover what God might be saying. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Making a Prayer Book" and read the top section about prayer. Give each child a piece of construction paper. Help them follow the directions on the resource sheet for making a prayer book. Invite them to use the art supplies to decorate the covers. Encourage children to use their prayer books at home each day for the next two weeks. There is a page for each day on which they can write or draw something that they prayed about and what they think God might like them to do or say.

❑ **Art zone: People mural** God sees beyond outside appearances and knows us deep inside. Invite children to take turns lying on a sheet of mural paper while a partner draws around them to form a body shape. Provide art and craft supplies for adding facial features and hair and then have them draw or write

within their body shapes some of the skills and qualities that God might see inside them. Group members might add things to each other's shapes, to say what they "see" inside each other. Create a display of the shapes, with a title such as "Chosen by God."

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Teach the sign for "hear" (p. 117) and use it during the prayer.

Pray O God, thank you that,
 like David, we are also chosen by you.
 Help us to hear your call to us,
 and to share your love in the world. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song, "Teach Me Wisdom" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send children out with these words, "You are chosen by God. God knows that you are amazing."

Reflect

How did the children express their understanding of being known and chosen by God? How might you support and affirm each of them as unique children of God?

Reflection

- ❑ Have you ever "heard" God speak to you during prayer, or at any other time?
- ❑ What did you hear God "say"?
- ❑ How does prayer help you to open our hearts so we can "hear" God better?
- ❑ What do you would like to pray about?
- ❑ Write or draw your prayer.





Chosen by God

A Reader's Theatre
based on 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13

Scene 1: Samuel is at home in Ramah.

God: Samuel, it's time to choose someone to be the next king.

Samuel: But Saul is still king.

God: Yes, he is. But one of these days my people will need a new king. So fill your horn with oil and anoint someone now who will be ready when the time comes.

Samuel: Where will I find this person to anoint?

God: Go to Bethlehem. To Jesse's house. There you will find the one I want you to anoint.

Scene 2: Samuel enters Bethlehem.

Samuel: Well, here I am about to enter the gates of Bethlehem. I see some of the town elders coming to greet me. They look like they might be a bit frightened of me.

Elder: Greetings, Samuel. God be with you. Do you come in peace?

Samuel: God be with you. Yes, I come in peace. I come to make a sacrifice to God. Please join me. And would you bring Jesse and his sons?

Scene 3: Later. Samuel is looking at Jesse's sons lined up before him.

Samuel: (*talking to himself*) Look at these sons of Jesse. Seven fine young men. I wonder which one God has chosen. Probably the oldest one. He's tall and strong. Besides, isn't it always the oldest son?

Jesse: What would you like me to do, Samuel?

Samuel: Please line your sons up. I want to walk down the line and meet each one.

Jesse: This is my oldest son.

Samuel: Hmm. I was sure it would be him, but it's not.

Jesse: This is my second son.

Samuel: Hmm. Not him.

Jesse: This is my third son.

Samuel: For goodness sake! Not him either.

Jesse: My fourth son.

Samuel: Nope.

Jesse: My fifth son.

Samuel: No.

Jesse: My sixth son.

Samuel: No.

Jesse: My seventh son.

Samuel: Not him either. I don't get it. What's going on here? Jesse, are these all your sons?

Jesse: Yes. Well, except the youngest one who is tending the sheep.

Samuel: Please send for him.

Scene 4: Later.

Jesse: Here he is, my eighth and youngest son. His name is David.

Samuel: Ah, David. You are the one.

David: What one?

Samuel: The one God wants to be the next king. I will pour this horn of oil on you and anoint you. When the time comes you will be king. The spirit of God is upon you, David.



Samuel had something very important to tell David. Find these words and use the remaining letters to discover the special message hidden in the puzzle.

Samuel oil sheep anoint prophet Bethlehem king Saul
inside David chosen God voice sons Jesse message

M	G	T	A	N	O	I	N	T	E
D	E	E	S	O	J	D	L	G	C
I	D	H	H	A	A	E	A	I	H
V	O	P	E	S	M	S	S	I	O
A	G	O	□	L	S	U	N	S	S
D	C	R	H	E	H	S	E	O	E
K	S	P	M	S	I	T	□	L	N
I	E	N	A	D	P	E	E	H	S
N	□	U	E	S	N	O	S	B	Y
G	L	O	V	O	I	C	E	U	□

Print the hidden message here



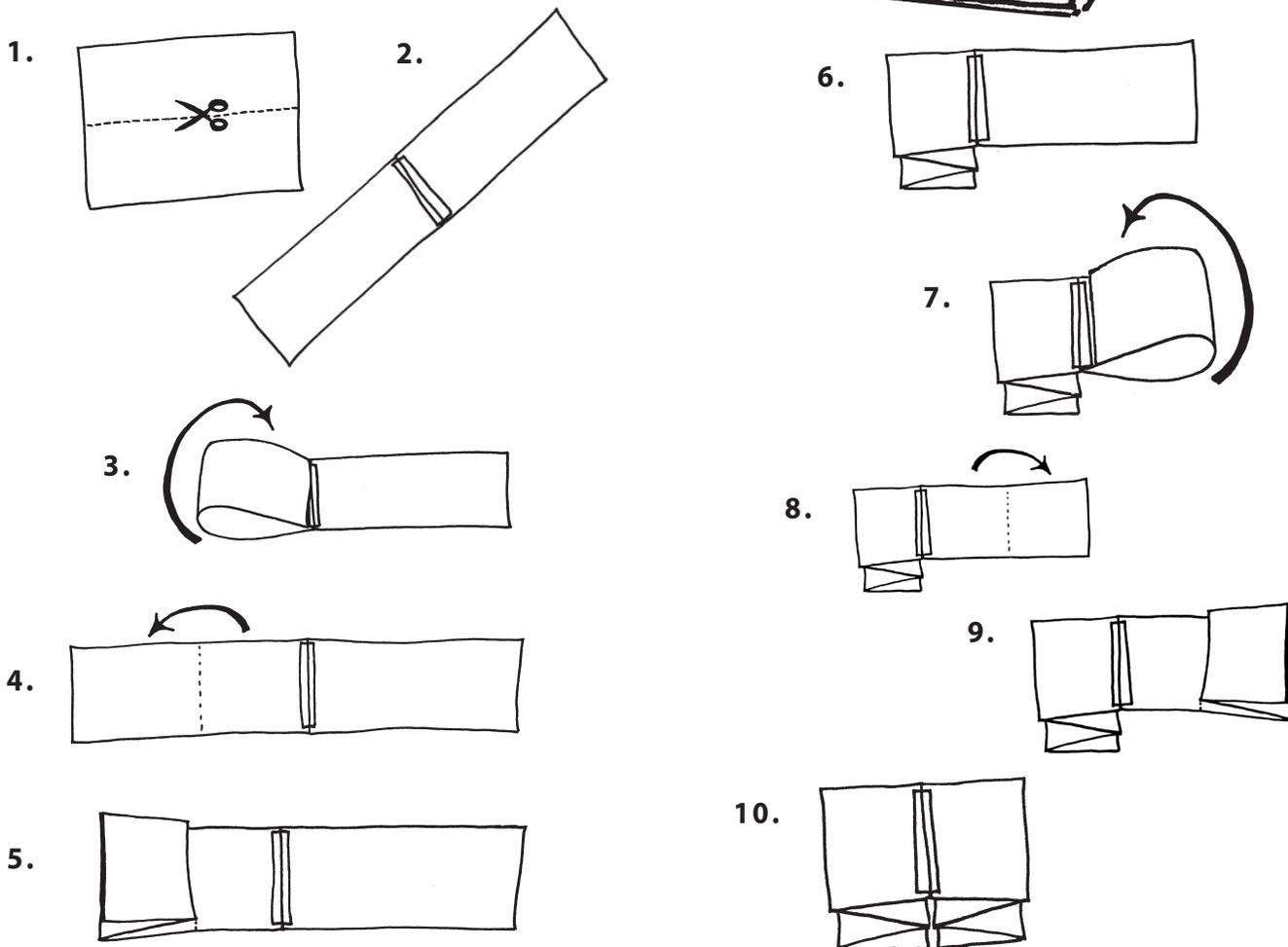
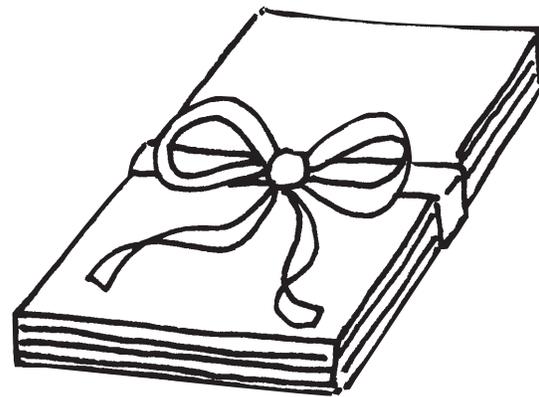


Making a Prayer Book

Prayer is a special way we have of talking with God. You can talk to God out loud, or you can talk to God just in your heart. You can talk to God by yourself or with a lot of other people.

But talking to God is only part of it. The other part is listening for God. God probably will not speak in your ear. God will tell you things in your heart. You have to practice listening for God. There are many different ways to listen for God. For example, some people spend some quiet time alone. Some recite prayers. Some chant a phrase. Some have special music to listen to. That's just for starters. How do you listen for God?

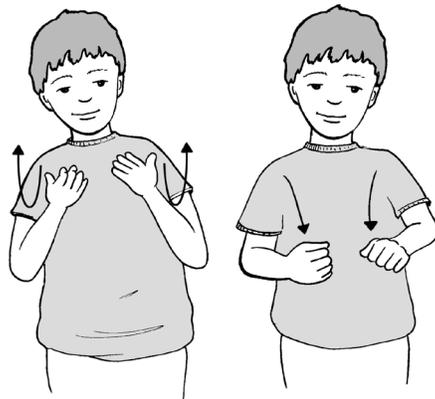
- Cut a piece of construction paper in half lengthwise so you have two strips the same size.
- Lay the strips end to end. Do not overlap. Tape the ends together with a piece of tape that is as long as the ends.
- Fold the paper to make a 16-page accordion book.



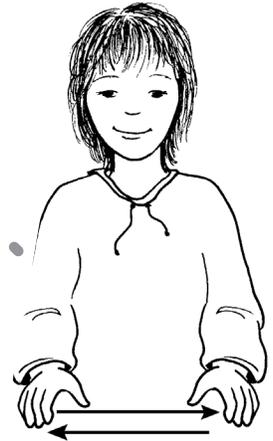
Sign Language



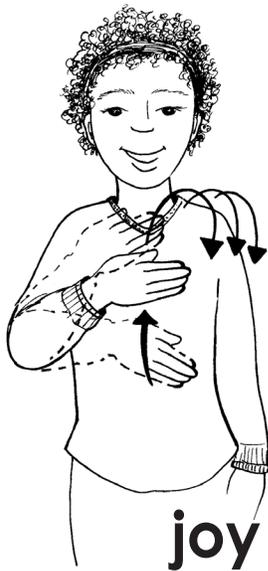
glory



courage



do



joy



God



gospel



hear



Session Resources

We Are Amazing

(Form two groups to say alternate lines, saying "Amen" together at the end.)

We are amazing! **We are amazing!**
 We are filled with power! **We are filled with power!**
 And God loves us! **And God loves us!**
 Like c-r-a-a-a-zy! **Like c-r-a-a-a-zy!**

God is amazing! **God is amazing!**
 God is filled with power! **God is filled with power!**
 And we love God! **And we love God!**
 Like c-r-a-a-a-zy! **Like c-r-a-a-a-zy!**
Amen!

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Musical notation for the first system of the song. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. Chord symbols G, C, and G are placed above the staff. The lyrics are: "I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where__ Lord, an-y-time". Below the main lyrics, the words "work", "pray", and "sing" are stacked vertically under the first part of the line.

Musical notation for the second system of the song. It continues the melody from the first system. Chord symbols Em, C, G, C, Em, C, Gsus⁴, and G are placed above the staff. The lyrics are: "I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where,__ Lord, an-y-time". Below the main lyrics, the words "work", "pray", and "sing" are stacked vertically under the first part of the line.

Words and music: traditional African-American.
 Arrangement: Alan Whitmore, © 2002 *Seasons of the Spirit*.

