Read this passage aloud as a group, and then work through the following questions:

1. In verses 1-3, we discover that Samuel’s sons failed to walk in their father’s footsteps. They took bribes and perverted justice. It is a tragic repeat of what we saw in Eli’s failure to discipline his sons. What do we learn here about the importance and priority of investing in the spiritual development of the next generation?

2. In verses 4-9, Israel demands that Samuel give them a king. The desire for a king, in and of itself, was not problematic. In fact, God had predicted that Israel would eventually have a king (see Gen. 17:15-16, Gen. 49:8-10, Deut. 17:14-20). In light of these predictions, what was wrong with Israel’s request here? What do we learn about our own motives when we ask God for things? (See James 4:3)

3. In verses 10-18, Samuel gives the people a wise warning, telling them what a king would be like. In short, Israel’s kings would “take, take, take.” Israel should have received this warning as a gracious gift! In fact, wise warnings are always a gift, whether they come from God or others. Read the following passages about wise warnings: Proverbs 12:15, 19:20, and 25:12. In your life, do you receive correction, warnings, and reproof as a gift? Or, are you generally defensive? Do you consider the warnings of God in Scripture to be just as valuable as his promises? Why or why not?

4. In verses 19-22, God concedes to the people’s demand for a king, knowing this will lead to much pain, suffering, and heartache. Israel will have king after king who will fail them and largely “take” from them (consider the failures of Saul, David, Solomon, and their descendants). Yet, ultimately, this line of failed kings will show the people their need for a true king; one who does not “take” but “gives.” That king is King Jesus! As Mark 10:45 puts it, Jesus came, “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Israel’s story shows us this timeless lesson: sometimes God gives us what we should not want, to show us what we really need. Have you found that to be true in your life? How so?