

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 40** as you introduce **Question #1: What have you been taught about respecting authority?**

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG page 41**. Highlight the author's comments about the problem of disrespect in our culture.

SAY: "A lack of respect is a serious problem in our society today."

Reinforce the Biblical principle of respecting authority by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 41): Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us understand the significance of having a healthy respect for those in authority.

SESSION 3

RESPECT AUTHORITY



The Point

Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.

The Bible Meets Life

Most authority figures are good leaders whose authority we can respect. Unfortunately, we encounter other authority figures who, at best, are inept in what

they do or, at worst, are self-serving or even "out to get us." When it comes to respect, the Bible makes no distinction between the two types of leaders. In the Book of 1 Samuel, David modeled for us how we can respect even the worst kinds of authority figures.

The Passage

1 Samuel 24:3-12

The Setting

As the previous chapter ended, David had narrowly escaped Saul as his men closed in on David. Advised that the Philistines had raided the homeland, Saul called off the pursuit to fight them. When Saul left abruptly to fight the Philistines, David took the opportunity to find a more secure location. Then without a hint as to how Saul fared in his latest Philistine scuffle, Saul headed back to the wilderness to resume chasing David.

1 Samuel 24:3-7

3 When Saul came to the sheep pens along the road, a cave was there, and he went in to relieve himself. David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave,

4 so they said to him, “Look, this is the day the LORD told you about: ‘I will hand your enemy over to you so you can do to him whatever you desire.’” Then David got up and secretly cut off the corner of Saul’s robe.

5 Afterward, David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the corner of Saul’s robe.

6 He said to his men, “I swear before the LORD: I would never do such a thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the LORD’s anointed.”

7 With these words David persuaded his men, and he did not let them rise up against Saul.

Then Saul left the cave and went on his way.

KEY WORDS: **The LORD’s anointed** (v. 6)—A person set apart by God, especially a king or other leader. Only God has the authority to remove an anointed person from that position.

Act with grace toward those in authority.

Verse 3. Working on an informant’s tip, Saul and a special force of 3,000 men scoured the precarious crags and caves known as the Rocks of the Wild Goats to track down David. The area included steep mountains intersected by wadis running down in deep ravines to the Dead Sea, as well as many caverns and caves that would have provided hiding places for David and his men. As Saul’s men made their way through the rough terrain, they came upon a series of **sheep pens along the road**. These sheepfolds would have included caves, which provided excellent shelter from bad weather and protection from wild beasts.

1 ▶ Feeling the urge of nature, Saul searched out a place where he could **relieve himself** privately. The law stipulated strict sanitary regulations (see Deut. 23:12-14), including that every soldier had to dig a hole and cover his excrement. So

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 24:3-7



10 minutes

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 42.

GUIDE: Refer members to **PSG page 43** to the summary of King Saul’s previous treatment of David:

- *In a jealous rage, Saul tried to pin David to a wall with a spear (1 Sam. 18:7-11; 19:9-10).*
- *Saul tried to have David killed by the Philistines (vv. 20-25).*
- *Saul ordered his son and his servants to kill David (19:1,11).*
- *Saul told Jonathan he wanted David dead (20:30-31).*
- *Saul killed priests for their allegiance to David (22:6-19).*

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:3-7.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** on page 43 and this page to explain that Saul was “relieving himself” inside the cave where David and his men were hiding.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** to describe David’s men’s belief that this was the fulfillment of God’s promise that He would “hand your enemy over to you.” Share the significance of the symbolism of David’s cutting off the corner of Saul’s robe.

GUIDE: Refer members to the **Key Words** on page 43 (**PSG, p. 42**) for more information on *the Lord’s anointed*. Remind the group that only God has the authority to remove a person from that position.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 3** on this page and page 45 to provide a more in-depth explanation of why David’s conscience bothered him and his remorse for his actions because Saul was “the Lord’s anointed.”

as Saul entered the cave, nobody—not even his personal bodyguard—would have accompanied him, making him quite vulnerable.

Can you imagine being one of David’s men? From your position in the cave, you peer out to see Saul and his massive army. Surprisingly, you see Saul coming into the cave. You scamper and crouch low to hide **in the recesses of the cave**. As you grasp your weapons, you see Saul has come alone. And as he squats, you are relieved to find out why. ◀

2 ▶ Verse 4. David’s men, now brimming with confidence, whispered to David, “**Look, this is the day the LORD told you about.**” Previously when Samuel told Saul the Lord had rejected him as king of Israel, Saul grabbed Samuel’s robe and it tore. Samuel turned to declare that God would tear the kingship from Saul and hand it over to someone better (1 Sam. 15:26-28). David’s men assured him that Saul’s presence in the cave at this very moment signified a fulfillment of God’s promise to deliver Saul into David’s hands. David’s men recognized a stroke of providence when they saw one. They pushed David to seize this opportunity to assassinate his adversary because, to them, God had obviously caused Saul to choose this place to relieve himself.

David remained unconvinced, yet saw it as an opportunity to make a statement. He crept stealthily toward the oblivious Saul, who had apparently laid his robe out of the way, far enough for David to **cut off** a portion of the edge. Saul’s robe would have had a distinctive fringe or design reserved only for the king, symbolizing his power and authority. By cutting off **the corner of Saul’s robe**, David had symbolically declared a revolt. ◀

Verse 5. David had wisely refused to interpret Saul’s stumbling into this particular cave as a sign from God to harm Saul as David’s men had insisted. Killing an enemy in battle or an attacker in self-defense hardly compared to the assassination of a king. Yet after he had cut off the corner of Saul’s robe, David immediately recognized the implications of his act. The expression **David’s conscience bothered him** literally meant that his heart struck him. David realized he had gone too far.

3 ▶ Verse 6. As he returned with the prize that had soured his heart, David said to his men: “**I swear before the LORD: I would never do such a thing to my lord, the LORD’s**

anointed.” As “the Lord’s anointed,” David knew Saul had been set apart or consecrated by God and as such, he must not be violated. God had established a specific bond with Saul that separated him from all other people. Therefore, to touch, defile, or attack the anointed one meant to approach the Lord Himself and to seek to defile, harm, and remove the Lord from His rightful place. David’s act of cutting off the corner of Saul’s robe had directly challenged Saul’s kingship and authority as **the Lord’s anointed**. David’s remorse for his actions meant he still respected Saul as the one anointed by God. The fact the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul (16:14) did not change David’s conviction that Saul was still the one “anointed” by the Lord to be Israel’s king.

We should not attempt to minimize David’s action by the amount of damage done, but rather in terms of his target. Cutting off the hem of Saul’s robe may seem trivial to us. In order to understand the scope of his action, we need to put it in more modern terms. If someone managed to slip behind the President of the United States and do something to disrespect him by word or action, no one would consider it something trivial. We would expect the individual who did it to face serious consequences for what he had done.

God has placed men and women in places of authority over us. In His sovereignty, He has raised them up and will remove them according to His will. Therefore, we should act with grace toward all who are in authority, and we should certainly not assault or kill them with our words or actions. Even when we disagree, we should show respect and honor for the position the person holds. ◀

Verse 7. Having repented of his actions, David had to get quite forceful with his men to prevent them from harming Saul. Inspired by their leader cutting off a portion of Saul’s robe and with Saul all alone in the cave taking care of business, they wanted to kill him when they had the clear opportunity. However, David **persuaded his men** not to do so. While not clear from most English translations, the Hebrew word for “persuaded” has more punch, because David literally “tore apart” his men as he forcefully stopped their ill-advised scheme and fiercely defended Saul’s life. Meanwhile, Saul got up, picked up his robe, and **went on his way** and returned to his men, oblivious of the fact that his enemy, David, has just spared his life.

David had passed a huge test. Israel’s next ruler willingly entrusted the matter of his becoming king to God’s best timing and judgment.

GUIDE: Refer group members to the paragraph on **PSG page 44** that says,

“It’s human nature to lash out at those who seek to harm us. Revenge represents a form of justice when someone is wronged.”

Explain that taking revenge is not a course of action we should take.

DISCUSS: Question #2 (PSG, p. 44): How do you typically respond to the authority figures in your life?

(Alternate: When have you been confronted with a difficult authority figure?)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Secure a paper or plastic crown. Pass the crown around and ask each person to share with the group one thing he or she would change in his or her life or in the culture if crowned king or queen for a day.

TRANSITION: “In the next verses David took the initiative to address the king and reveal what he had done.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

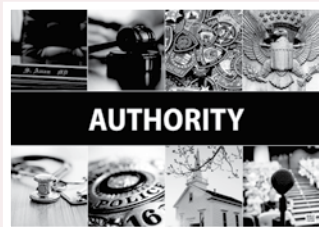
1 Samuel 24:8-11



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:8-11.

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 3: Authority.** Say, “Symbols of authority communicate the power and responsibility of those who hold these positions.”



DISCUSS: Question #3 (PSG, p. 45): What are some reasons why it is difficult to confront those in authority over you?

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary** 4 to show how David’s words and gestures demonstrated humility.

1 Samuel 24:8-11

8 After that, David got up, went out of the cave, and called to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David knelt low with his face to the ground and paid homage.

9 David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of people who say, ‘Look, David intends to harm you’?”

10 You can see with your own eyes that the LORD handed you over to me today in the cave. Someone advised me to kill you, but I took pity on you and said: I won’t lift my hand against my lord, since he is the LORD’s anointed.

11 Look, my father! Look at the corner of your robe in my hand, for I cut it off, but I didn’t kill you. Recognize that I’ve committed no crime or rebellion. I haven’t sinned against you even though you are hunting me down to take my life.

Speak with grace and conviction toward those in authority.

4 ▶ **Verse 8.** After Saul strolled far enough away from the cave for David to come out safely, David called out to him from behind, “**My lord the king!**” Rather than harm Saul, David chose to submit to him. David had proven he would not oppose Saul or act in any detrimental way toward him. David’s action came with a measure of risk, since he and his men clearly enjoyed safety in the cave. They just needed to keep quiet and let Saul and his men depart. Then they could make their escape going in the opposite direction.

Imagine Saul’s shock when he heard David call out, “My lord the king!” from the cave he had just left. Prior to launching an extended speech, David called Saul both “my lord” and “the king” in a posture of humility. Clearly David wanted to ensure that David posed no threat to Saul’s life. In doing this, David emphasized what he had just said to his men while letting Saul know he was not a rebel. ◀

5 ▶ **Verse 9.** David gave no time for Saul to reply to his signals of loyalty, because he immediately articulated his passionate and eloquent plea for reconciliation. He appealed to the king to set aside the things others had told him, to listen to David's words, to compare them with his actions, and then judge his guilt or innocence for himself. In beginning his appeal, David cautiously sidestepped accusing Saul of initiating malicious actions against him.

With the skill of an expert lawyer, David tactfully tossed blame for Saul's behavior upon some of Saul's servants by asking why he would **"listen to the words of people who say, 'Look, David intends to harm you.'"** David's integrity and success had triggered some measure of hatred and envy in Saul's court. After all, those of the tribe of Benjamin had no small interest in the kingship of Saul. These men had come to positions of authority because of family and tribal relationship to Saul. Previously in appealing to their tribal loyalty as well as to their greed, Saul had suggested that they had much to lose if David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, became king in Saul's place (1 Sam. 22:6-8). David knew Saul's fear of David came from Saul himself, not from anyone else. By placing the blame on nameless others, David made it easier for Saul to concede, "They were wrong" instead of "I was wrong." Even in confronting Saul, David covered Saul's sin.

Speaking with grace and conviction to people in authority will often require a good measure of tact. David spoke the truth to Saul, but he showed mercy and kindness to Saul. When speaking to people who may have wronged us or others, we would do well to follow David's model. In writing to believers enduring great persecution from civil authorities, Peter said, "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). This kind of love does not turn a blind eye to wrongs but sees and accepts the faults of others. ◀

Verse 10. Continuing to make his case, David called on Saul to testify as his first witness. He said, **"You can see with your own eyes that the LORD handed you over to me today in the cave."** Not long before, Saul searched for David every day, but God did not give him into Saul's hand (1 Sam. 23:14). In contrast, David credited God with handing Saul over to him, yet David let Saul go unscathed. Saul realized he had escaped death. David had emerged from the very cave in which Saul, only moments before, sat in a vulnerable position completely unaware of David's proximity.

David told Saul that he had refused to listen when **"someone advised me to kill you."** David's men urged their leader to take advantage of the good fortune of Saul's

GUIDE: Refer members to the six ways shown on **PSG page 45** that David showed respect to Saul:

1. *David confronted Saul, but he spoke with honor and respect.*
2. *David bowed as a sign of respect to the king.*
3. *David urged the king not to listen to the advisors who wrongly accused David of seeking Saul's life.*
4. *David offered evidence to show his unquestioned respect for the king.*
5. *David called Saul "my father."*
6. *David showed his treatment of the king revealed his relationship with God.*

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 5** to highlight the eloquence of David's defense and appeal to King Saul.

SAY: "Speaking with grace and conviction to people in authority will often require a good measure of tact."

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 6 to reinforce David's defense that he was innocent of any wrongdoing. Emphasize that he offered absolute proof that he had the opportunity to kill Saul.

DISCUSS: Question #4
(PSG, p. 46): **What can we learn from David about dealing with difficult people in authority?**

(Alternate: How do David's actions and attitudes compare to what we see in our culture?)

TRANSITION: "In the next verse, David concluded his statement to King Saul by once again referencing his trust in God and loyalty to the Lord's anointed."

coming into the cave to relieve himself. They interpreted it as God delivering Saul into David's hands. But David **took pity** on Saul, that is, he looked with compassion on Saul.

David declared his motive for sparing the king: he recognized that Saul was **the Lord's anointed**. David challenged the idea that he wanted to overthrow Saul by killing him. To harm the king would have been an act of rebellion against God, who had enthroned him. David respected Saul's authority as king because he respected God's ultimate authority.

The phrase, "**I won't lift my hand against my lord, since he is the Lord's anointed,**" sometimes gets misinterpreted to mean that one should never speak against a leader, thinking that this person is above criticism or rebuke. But when David recognized that Saul was "the Lord's anointed" and refused to harm him, this meant David would not kill him. He humbly confronted Saul with his sin, hoping Saul would change his heart. Similarly, sometimes our leaders need correcting. David provided the model for speaking with grace whenever this becomes necessary.

6 ▶ **Verse 11.** David saved his material evidence for last, "**Look, my father! Look at the corner of your robe in my hand.**" By addressing Saul as his "king" (v. 8) and as his "lord" (vv. 8,10) and now as his "father," David expressed both his respect for Saul and his submission to him. While it was true that Saul had given his daughter Michal to David as his wife, the term *father* was often used in ancient times simply as a token of respect by an inferior to a superior.

As David held up the corner of Saul's robe, he offered absolute proof that he had the opportunity to kill Saul. If Saul had any doubt about how close he came to dying in that cave, David held all the evidence needed to erase all doubt. Saul's robe would serve as a reminder of how close he had come to death, and that David had spared his life. The robe may have also reminded Saul of Samuel's words to him, that God would transfer the kingdom to another ruler.

With the evidence in his hand, David pronounced the verdict, "**I haven't sinned against you.**" He cried out for Saul to recognize that he was not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion against the throne. David had not wronged Saul in any way, yet Saul was **hunting** David down like a wild animal to kill him. David had presented irrefutable evidence, and Saul needed to acknowledge the facts. ◀

1 Samuel 24:12

12 “May the LORD judge between me and you, and may the LORD take vengeance on you for me, but my hand will never be against you.”

Leave conflict with authority figures in God’s hands.

7 ▶ **Verse 12.** David did not need to say or do anything more to defend himself before Saul. He referred the matter to the Lord, “**May the LORD judge between me and you.**” In making his case, David had proved that he had not harmed Saul when he had the opportunity in the cave. Here David made it plain that, “**My hand will never be against you.**” He had no intention of using violence against Saul by calling on the Lord to **take vengeance** should He do so.

A day would come when Saul would face judgment. On that day he would lose the throne. David trusted the Lord as the proper Judge who could both punish the oppressor, and deliver the oppressed. David would take no action to deliver Saul to his judgment. He rested his case entirely in the Lord’s hands. In so doing, David set a dynamic example of humility and loyalty. Although driven to insanity by his sinful behavior, Saul was still the ruler of God’s people. Therefore, David humbled himself and declared his loyalty to King Saul.

Leaving a conflict with someone in authority in God’s hands will often not be the easy choice. At first we may have great intentions as we act and speak with grace and conviction. But over time, if this does not appear to bring about the desired results, temptations might come to join with others to speed up the change we want to see take place by speaking against the person in authority or by taking action to have the individual removed. But even when the authority figure fails to do what is right, we must exemplify Christlike behavior and leave the matter to God. ◀

God in His wisdom has established the authorities in our lives (Rom. 13:1). He ordained three spheres of authority: family, church, and government. All three exist because God established them as the means by which people relate to one another and to Him. Each sphere has leaders that God has ordained. Some are good, while others are not so good.

We can do little about how the authorities in our lives conduct themselves and lead. Our responsibilities lie in the way we conduct ourselves and how we act and speak toward those in authority. We should remember that by submitting to our authorities, we obey God.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 24:12



15 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:12.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 7** to show how David trusted God with the outcome and refused to take vengeance himself.

SAY: “When we have a conflict with someone in authority, leaving it in God’s hands often will not be the easy choice. But we should follow David’s example of humility before the king and before God.”

DISCUSS: Question #5 (PSG, p. 48): What holds you back from trusting God in situations involving difficult people?

(Alternate: Why is it hard to leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord?)

DO: Encourage group members to complete “**Submitting to Authority**” activity on **PSG page 48.**

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point:** **Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.**

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out** (PSG, p. 49; see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

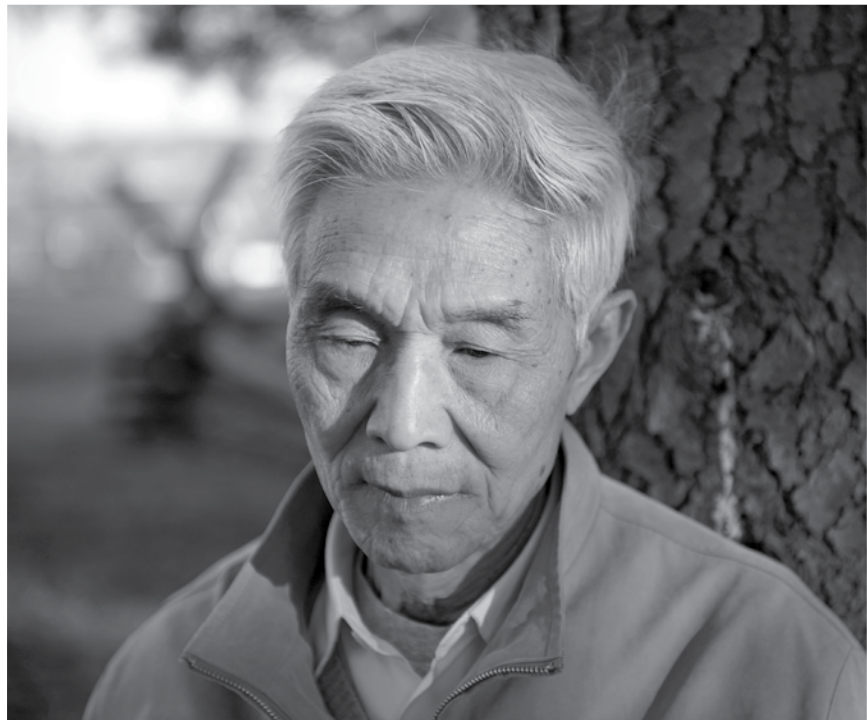
GUIDE: Emphasize that views on showing respect to those in authority should be guided by the teachings and principles in God's Word, not from culture or bad experiences we have had with those in authority.

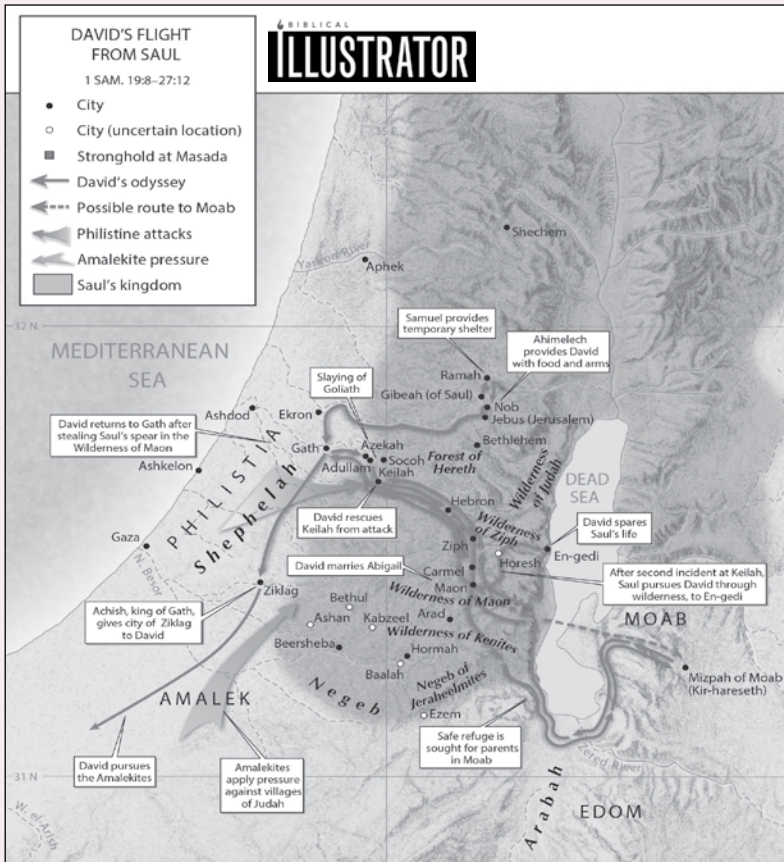
PRAY: "Father, help us to overcome our natural tendency to take matters into our own hands in seeking vengeance. Help us to place our trust in You when dealing with difficult people in positions of authority."

LIVE IT OUT

God has placed authorities over you. How will you honor Christ this week and show them honor and respect?

- ▶ **Encourage.** We live in a day when authority is questioned more than honored. Choose an authority figure in your life—a police officer, elected government official or church leader—and express your support and encouragement.
- ▶ **Pray.** Follow the principle in 1 Timothy 2:1 and pray regularly for those in authority. "I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."
- ▶ **Repent.** If there is someone in authority to whom you have failed to show proper honor or respect, confess that to God. Change your attitude, and as appropriate, apologize to the person for your former lack of respect.





David's early life as a warrior and a shepherd proved to be excellent preparation for the time he spent fleeing from Saul. David learned how to be resourceful and how to recognize danger. The solitude of shepherding helped him deal with loneliness during the early days of his flight from Saul. The skills

and leadership David learned and developed while fighting for Saul helped him control the men who gathered around him. Ultimately, David's faith in God sustained him through the difficult days of Saul's pursuit.

The excerpt above is from the article "David as an Outlaw" (Fall 2008), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus Christ is the supreme authority over all of us. We should acknowledge His authority and surrender to His lordship by placing our faith and trust in Him.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



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