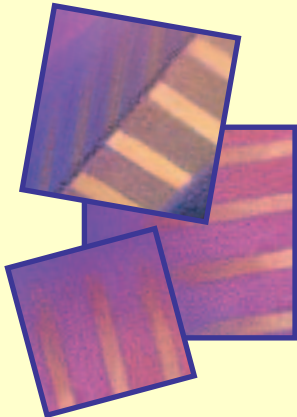


MIDDLE SCHOOL  
**THE**  
**Rock**  
SEP—NOV 2005 • LESSON 1

▶ **DANGEROUS** ◀

**Substitutes**





**W**hen I first saw Jimmy with the pistol I felt a little scared, but the more he let me handle it, the more I began to say to myself, “Man, this is cool! Folks will really look up to me now.”

**M**y first thought when I heard the tape Justin had given me was, “Why would anyone want to pray to Satan?” By the time I had finished listening to the tape I found myself strangely drawn to do the very thing I had questioned when I first started listening.



# DANGEROUS Substitutes

**I** must admit I was shaking like a leaf after Kim called and said her parents were gone and that Curtis and Ryan would be at her house in 15 minutes. Within five minutes I had convinced my grandmother that I was going to the library. Finally, my big chance to show Ryan that I really liked him had come.

Experiences like the ones highlighted above occur daily in the lives of youth today. In different ways young people are invited to step out of safety zones into what promise to be satisfying experiences—but in the end the results can be pain, confusion, deep scars, and even death.

At work in the world are forces that are bent on our destruction. These forces don't come with loud announcements of destruction. As a matter of fact, their victims often think that they will be better off by doing whatever they are tempted to do. Teens sometimes step out of bounds with the intention of quickly getting back in the safety zone, but they



are in over their heads before they know it.

One of the negative influences that has an unhealthy draw on teens and preteens is gangs. Gangs offer acceptance to those who otherwise feel unloved or rejected. They are a means of gaining self-respect for those who are hungry for recognition from any source. Youth are willing to sacrifice a good relationship with their parents and other adults for “high fives” from their homeys—even when it means living outside of the safety zone.

People are often drawn into unwholesome activities because everybody else is doing it. This initial attraction grips them, and the next thing they know they are on the inside looking out. The first experience then leads to more and deeper activity.

When Dwayne saw several of his peers at Jackson Middle School with their hats cocked to the same side and their athletic shoes laced the same way, he could hardly wait to chat with his friend Eric who was a part of the group.

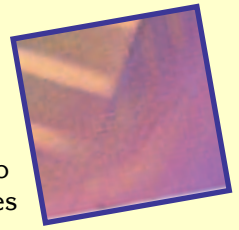
Eric’s invitation for Dwayne to meet him in one of the vacant lots in the neighborhood was met with mixed feelings—both fear and excitement. Within weeks Dwayne’s attendance at youth group activities had dropped off, and it became apparent that he was one of “them.”

When I was in middle school, cigarette smoking and beer drinking were more distasteful than pleasurable—but my friend was doing it, and because I was afraid of my friend, I went along with the program. That’s the way that peer pressure works. It forces you out of bounds even when you really don’t want to be there.

Many youth are desperate for attention. Neglect or rejection by family or friends makes them just right for those who mean them no good. Some youth are willing to do anything it takes to get others to recognize them.

Every year more youth face situations like poverty, live-in boyfriends or girlfriends of a single parent, violence in their neighborhoods, competition in school and sports. So they look for guidance, help, and relief. Some, in their desperation, turn to friends who

*Continued on page 6.*



# WE WANT A

## The Israelites Demand a King

**S**uppose you're watching TV one night when a news bulletin suddenly interrupts your favorite program. The announcer looks very serious as he reports a big event—the story in today's Scripture. But static suddenly interferes with the sound and you can hear only pieces of the broadcast.

Read 1 Samuel 8:4-10 and 19-22, and fill in the missing pieces of this news report:

### NEWS BULLETIN

Good evening. In Israel today, a group of national leaders demanded that \_\_\_\_\_ appoint a \_\_\_\_\_ to rule the nation. A spokesman for the leaders gave two reasons for their request:

1. Judge Samuel is \_\_\_\_\_ and his sons \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.

*Judge Samuel was unavailable for comment.*

Later that week another news bulletin follows up the first one. Your TV is still on the blink. Fill in the missing phrases.

### FOLLOW-UP NEWS BULLETIN

Good evening. Judge Samuel has returned from a week of summit meetings with God, bringing the people this answer: "You aren't rejecting Samuel, you are \_\_\_\_\_."

"And let me warn you—life will be rough with a king. He will demand your best crops as taxes."

But the people of Israel have responded: \_\_\_\_\_.



# KING—

## BIBLE STUDY

Now the news team has learned that Judge Samuel has agreed to grant the people's request. Israel will have a king.

### **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

Pretend you are Samuel. How would you answer these questions?

- 1. Judge Samuel, how did you feel when the people asked for a king? Why?*
- 2. The people are right: your sons are unfit to run the nation. So what's wrong with the people wanting a king?*
- 3. Why do you think the people didn't listen when you told them how rough having a king would be?*

### **Today's Scripture** **1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22**

<sup>4</sup>So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup>They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

<sup>6</sup>But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup>As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup>Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

<sup>10</sup>Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king.

<sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" <sup>19</sup>they said. "We want a king over us. <sup>20</sup>Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

<sup>21</sup>When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. <sup>22</sup>The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."

Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."



Continued from page 3.

are often as confused as they are. In their efforts to relieve pain they multiply it through unwise choices.

If you feel drawn into any kind of activity that dishonors God, here's how to avoid it.

Pray for strength to resist the crowd and follow only God. Also, ask your parents, youth leaders, and other Christians to pray with you.

Teens who are serious about their relationship with the Lord Jesus need to avoid unhealthy situations, places, activities,



and people. Sometimes seemingly no-harm, low-risk activities can be the very ones that leave the deepest wounds or open

the door for more serious things. Draw safe boundaries for yourself and live your life within the safety zone of Scripture.

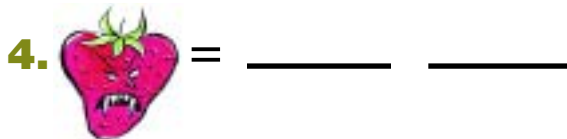
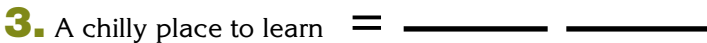
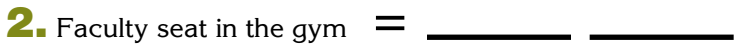
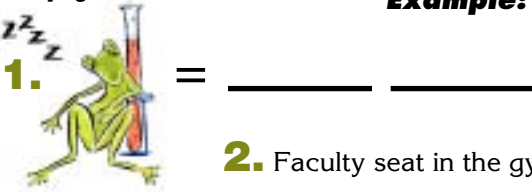
Choose your friends carefully. Find friends who love the Lord and will help you grow spiritually. God doesn't want you to isolate yourself from all unbelievers. But if they are pressuring you to operate outside of your preset boundaries, cut them loose.



# H NKY PNKY S

Since it's back-to-school time, here are some school-related phrases and drawings that represent two rhyming words. Can you figure out what they are? Answers are on page 8.

**Example:** Monkey coat = ape cape



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**Some problems can make you feel as if you're going in circles without a compass. When life throws you a curve, God can straighten things out.**

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

# Path Finder

## MONDAY

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. List some decisions you have to make. How do you usually make them? What do you think it means to "lean not on your own understanding"?

## TUESDAY

What does it mean to "acknowledge" God? Create a day-long schedule and write God's name in when you plan to spend time with Him.

## WEDNESDAY

Draw a heart on a piece of paper. Shade it to show whether you are wholehearted or halfhearted when it comes to leaning on God during scary times.

## THURSDAY

Draw a path on a piece of paper. Mark on the path any goals you have for your life. Then make it a point to pray about these goals. Commit your "path" to God.

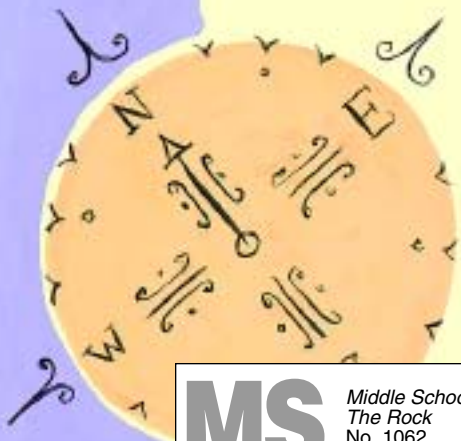
## FRIDAY

Read Psalm 32:8. What does God promise in this verse? How does that promise function as a "path straightener"?

## SATURDAY

End the week praising God for His promised guidance.

Answers to Hinky Pinkys from page 6. 1. groggy; 2. teacher bleacher; 3. cool school; 4. scary berry.



**MS**

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Lesson 1