



LONG STORY SHORT

A Year through the Bible

Reflection Guide

Standing Tall, Falling Hard 1 Samuel 1–15 Exploring the Story, Chapter 10

1 Samuel picks up where the book of Judges left off: Israel has descended into anarchy. Once again, the promise is threatened—by Israel's faithlessness and disobedience. The people beg God to give them a king so that they can be just like every other nation, and so that they can have victory over their enemies, but this is a rejection of God's leadership over the people of Israel. Yet, despite Israel's rejection of God, God's grace shines through, and God does not reject Israel.

This week, we enter the world of Israel's kings.

MONDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 1–2

Reflect: Infertile, Hannah is the target of ridicule, and her fervent prayers for a child are mistaken as drunkenness. Only God hears Hannah's story with compassion and empathy. With whom in this story do you most closely identify? Why? How, if at all, might Hannah's experience encourage you in your faith?

Respond: Reflect on your faith journey. Can you identify a moment that was so raw or painful, that it brought you to pour out your heart in prayer? What did you learn about God and yourself as a result?

TUESDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 3–4

Reflect: Facing defeat by the Philistines, the Israelites try to use the Ark of God as a weapon to ensure victory. Despite this, the Philistines defeat the Israelites, and capture the Ark. How, if at all, are you tempted to use God to advance your own agenda? How do you try to avoid confusing your agenda for God's?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to help you understand God's will and the wisdom to keep from confusing your will with God's

WEDNESDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 5–7

Reflect: Even after the Ark was returned, it still seemed as though God had abandoned Israel. Samuel becomes judge and leads Israel back to God, removing the worship of other gods and encouraging the people to obey God's law. Then, the people experience God's presence and defeat the Philistines. When, if ever, has it felt as though God had abandoned you? What, if anything, changed so that you could experience God's presence again?

Respond: In prayer, take a moment to realize that you are, at every moment in God's presence. Relax and enjoy being in the presence of God.

THURSDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 8–9

Reflect: The leaders of Israel reject God as their leader and ask Samuel to choose a king for them, so that they can be like all the other nations. Samuel warns Israel's leaders about the dangers of a monarchy, but the leaders insist on having a king. What tensions, if any, between wanting to be like other people and wanting to live faithfully, do you experience? What, if anything, gives you the strength to choose faithfulness over being like everyone else?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to strengthen your resolve to live faithfully and to ease the temptation to compromise and conform.

FRIDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 10–11

Reflect: Even though appointing a king was a rejection of God's leadership over Israel, God still rescues Israel from the oppression of the Ammonites. Does God's decision to rescue Israel now that Saul was king surprise you? Why or why not? What does this story show you about God's character?

Respond: Reflect on your faith journey. Can you identify a time when you rejected God's involvement in your life? How did God respond?

SATURDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 12–13

Reflect: Samuel encourages the Israelites to remain faithful to God, and tells them that God will not abandon them. Similarly, Samuel tells the people that he will continue to pray for Israel and teach them. What does this passage show you about the relationship between God's character and the character of faithful people? If your character were to more closely align with God's, what would need to change in your life?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to mold your character to increasingly align with God's character.

SUNDAY

Read: 1 Samuel 14–15

Reflect: Once again, Saul disobeys God's commands by plundering the Amalekites. Samuel delivers the message that God has rejected Saul as king. Saul tries to dress up his disobedience as piety by claiming that he intended to sacrifice all the choice animals he had not killed in battle, but Samuel sees through the excuses and claims, "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (15:22–23). Which is easier for you, sacrifice or obedience? Why? Specifically, what are some ways that you could be even more obedient and faithful to God?

Respond: In worship, ask God to strengthen you to be an obedient and faithful follower.

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