

GOD the DELIVERER



*Our Search for Identity and
Our Hope for Renewal*

STUDY GUIDE | EIGHT SESSIONS

RANDY FRAZEE



HarperChristian
Resources

God the Deliverer Study Guide
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Requests for information should be addressed to: HarperChristian Resources,
3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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ISBN 978-0-310-13478-7 (softcover)
ISBN 978-0-310-13479-4 (ebook)

First printing May 2021 / Printed in the United States of America

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The story of the Bible reveals that heaven and earth are woven more closely together than we might think. All through the Bible, we find two parallel and beautiful dramas unfolding.

There is the **lower story**. Humans live on earth and see things from a horizontal perspective. We can't see what is around the bend but must make decisions on which way to go, where we will live, and how we will respond to what happens to us. We focus on getting through the day as best we can. We interpret why we think other people do what they do. We struggle to know why certain things happen and why other things don't happen.

Then there is the **upper story**. This is how the story is unfolding from God's perspective. Heaven is breaking into our world, and the story of God's seeking love, perpetual grace, and longing for a relationship with ordinary people is breathtaking. Of course, as humans living on this earth, we won't always be able to see what is taking place in this upper story. But we can be sure that God is always present, at work, and active in every detail of our lives.

The objective of *God the Deliverer*—the second in a series of three small-group studies in *The Story* series—is to

introduce you to these lower and upper stories. In this study, you will examine the disastrous reign of King Saul and the successful reign of King David . . . a former shepherd boy who was a man after God's own heart. You will see how the kingdom broke into two—Israel and Judah—after the reign of King Solomon and how the people of both kingdoms ultimately fell into idolatry. You will witness the consequences when those two kingdoms fall—but also how God always had a plan to deliver his people from their exile.

God wants to be with you. He wants to fill your life with greater purpose, meaning, and understanding. He wants to weave your lower story into his greater upper story that he has been writing. He wants to walk with you in every situation of life. As you recognize how closely his story and your story fit together, you *will* experience his love, grace, and wisdom.

SESSION OUTLINE

Each session is divided into two parts. In the group section, you will watch a video teaching from Randy Frazee and follow along with the outline that has been provided. (Note that you can watch these videos via streaming access at any time by following the instructions found on the inside front cover of this guide.) You will then recite the key verse(s), the key idea, and engage in some guided group discussion through the questions provided. You will close your group with a brief time of prayer.

PERSONAL STUDY

At the end of the group section, you will find a series of readings and study questions for you to go through on your own

during the week. The first section will help you *know the story* by asking you to read several key passages from the Bible that were covered during your group time. The next section will help you *understand the story* through a short reading from Randy Frazee that will help you grasp the main takeaways. The third section will help you *live the story* by challenging you to put what you have learned into practice. The final section will help you *tell the story* through a short prompt for a conversation starter around a meal or dinner table. **The personal study is a critical component in helping you grasp the overall story of the Bible, so be sure to complete this study during the week before your next group meeting.**

GROUP SIZE

God the Deliverer can be experienced in a group setting (such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or small-group gathering) and also as an individual study. If you are doing the study as a group with a large number of participants, it is recommended that everyone watches the video together and then breaks up into smaller groups of four to six for the discussion time. In either case, you can access the teaching videos via the streaming code found on the inside front cover.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Each participant in the group should have his or her own study guide. Although the course can be fully experienced with just the video and study guide, participants are also encouraged to have a copy of *The Story*, which includes selections from the *New International Version* that relate to each week's session.

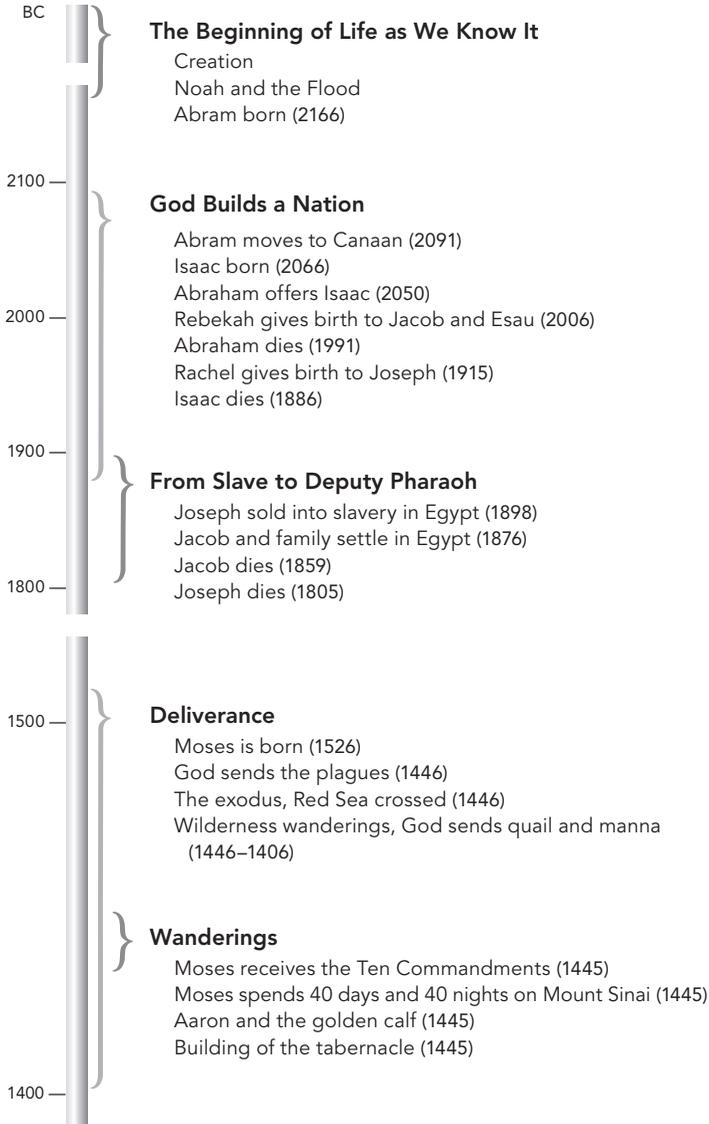
Reading *The Story* as you go through the study will provide even deeper insights and make the journey even richer and more meaningful.

FACILITATION

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for keeping track of time during discussions and activities. Facilitators may also read questions aloud and monitor discussions, prompting participants to respond and ensuring everyone that has the opportunity to participate. (For more thorough instructions, refer to the the leader's guide that is included at the back of this guide.)

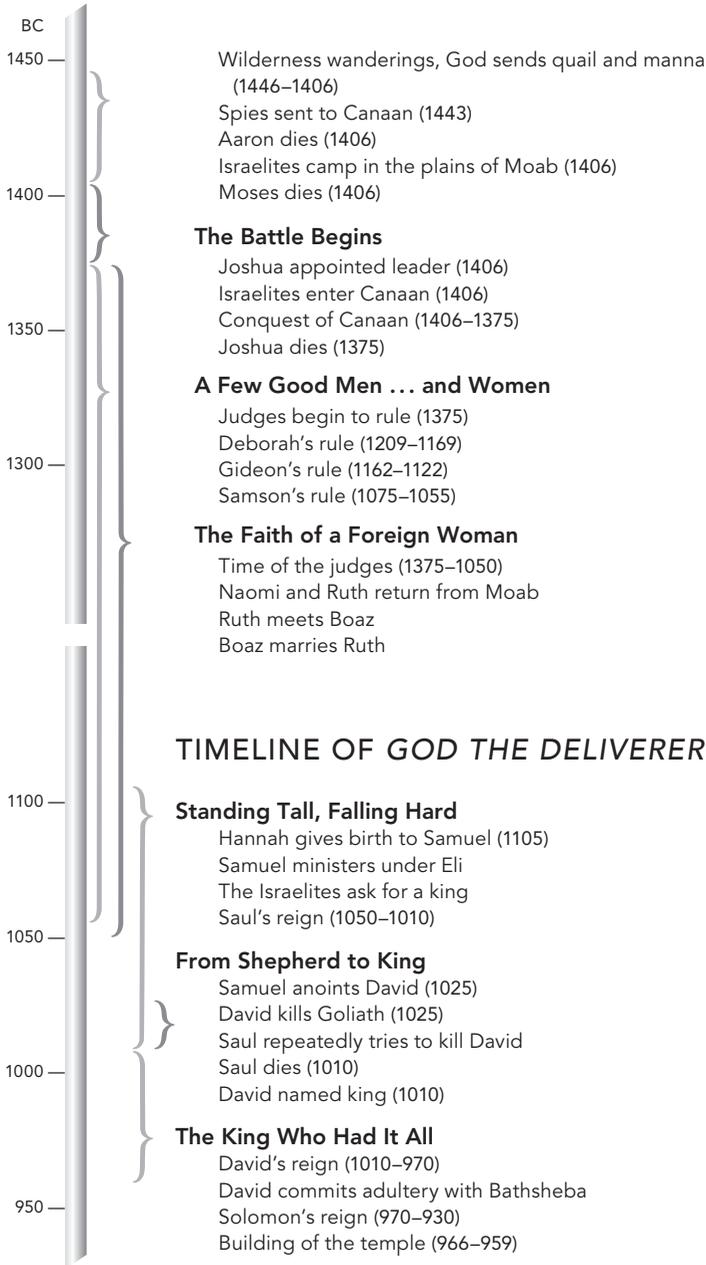
TIMELINE OF THE STORY

TIMELINE OF GOD THE CREATOR

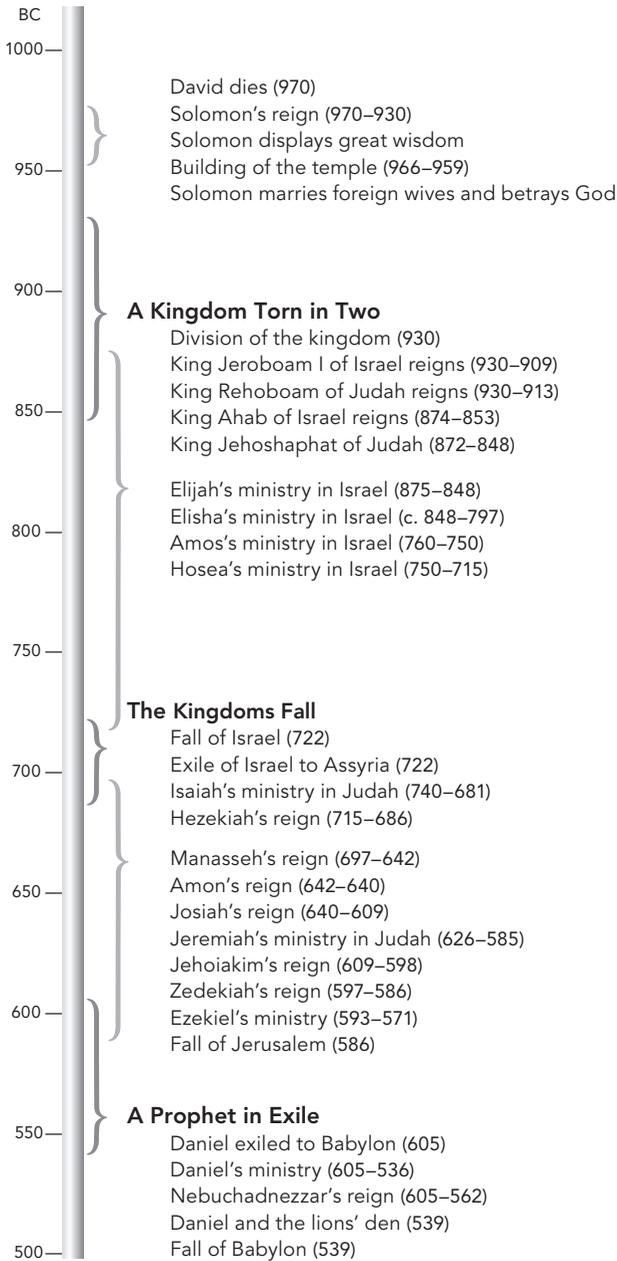


Note: Dates are approximate and dependent on the interpretative theories of various scholars.

God the Deliverer Study Guide



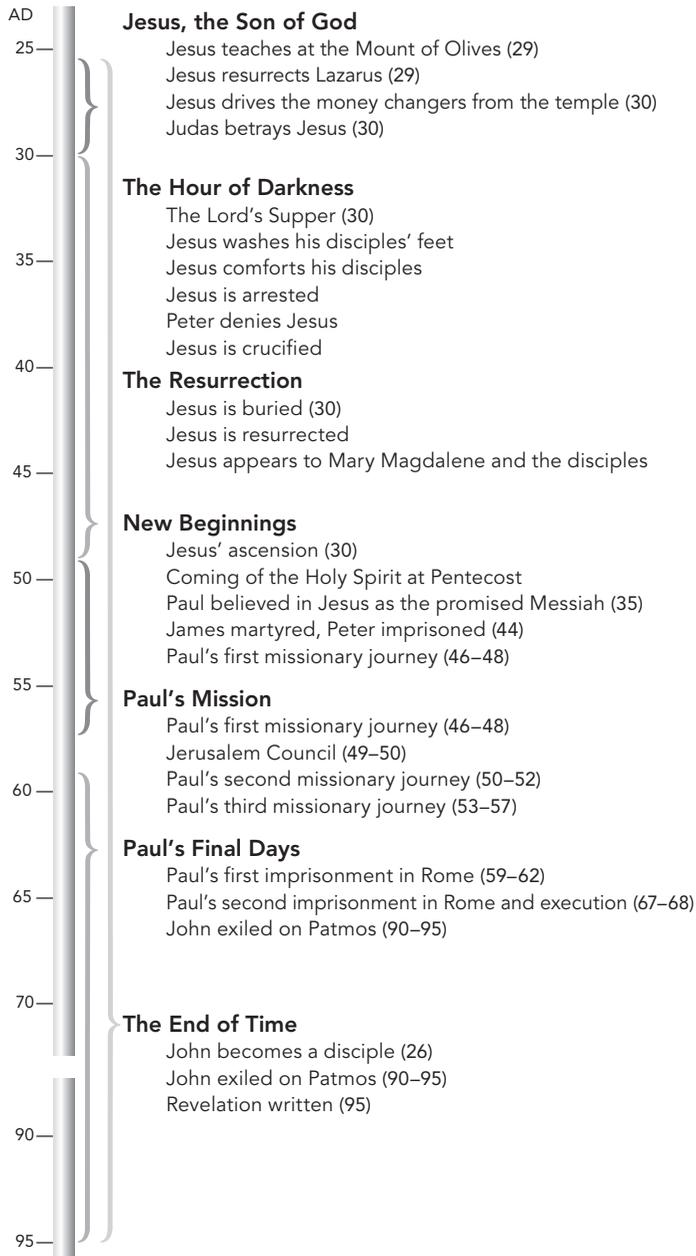
Timeline of The Story



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Timeline of The Story





Session 1



STANDING TALL, FALLING HARD

1 SAMUEL 1–15

WELCOME

There is a natural desire within each of us to want fit in and be like everyone else. It is in our relational DNA. Just consider the ways we admire people in our society, whether it is a sports star, a talented musician, or an influential leader. We see that person's success and decide we want that in our lives. We want to *be* just like that person we have placed on a pedestal. The people of Israel were no different from us. God had called them as a nation to be different and set apart for him . . . but they wanted to be just like the other nations around them. In particular, they wanted to have a *king*. God had previously warned them of the consequences of having a king—and would warn them again through the prophet Samuel. He always prefers that in our lower story we do things his way. But ultimately, he decided to grant their wish.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Welcome to session one of *God the Deliverer*. If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourselves. Watch the video (see the streaming video access provided on the inside front cover) and use the following outline to record some of the main points. The answer key is found at the end of the session.

- God is going to reveal his plan through a nation that he has built called _____. God wanted to be their only _____, but they had a different idea in mind.
- God opens the womb of a woman and provides her with a _____. She appropriately names him “_____,” which means “heard from God.”
- God allows the Israelites to have a human king. It isn’t the way that he _____ it unfolding in the lower story, but it doesn’t change the ultimate _____ in the upper story. God is still working out his promise to reveal his presence, his power, and his plan to get all people back.
- Samuel tells the Israelites that what they are doing is _____, but that God is allowing it. The warning to both the Israelites and the new king is that they must _____ God. If they don’t, it’s going to be trouble.

- Saul is _____ God, causing people to get the wrong picture of him—as cruel and greedy versus just and holy.
- God calls Christians to live distinctively different _____. We are challenged by Jesus that although we live in the world, we should not be of the world.

GETTING STARTED

Begin your discussion by reciting the following key verse and key idea together as a group. Now try to state the key verse from memory. On your first attempt, use your notes if you need help. On your second attempt, try to state it completely from memory.

Key Verse: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

Key Idea: God wanted to be Israel’s only king, but the people wanted a human king so they could be like the surrounding nations. God allows them to select a man named Saul as their king and places his Spirit inside him to empower him. But Saul quickly fails in his mission to represent God and creates consequences in the life of Israel. So God intervenes and removes Saul from the throne.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. What part of this week's teaching encouraged or challenged you the most? Why?

2. Why did God want the people of Israel to see *him* as their king?

3. Why did Saul seem like the perfect choice for a human king over Israel?

4. What situation caused God to ultimately reject Saul as king over Israel?

5. How does God call us to live differently today from the rest of the world?

6. What is your biggest takeaway as you reflect on what you learned this week?

CLOSING PRAYER

One of the most important things we can do together in community is to pray for each other. This is not simply a closing

prayer to end your group time but a portion of time to share prayer requests and life, to review how God has answered past prayers, and to actually pray for one another. Use the space below to record prayer requests and praises. Also, make sure to pray by name for people God might add to your group—especially your neighbors.

Name	Request/Praise
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

FOR NEXT WEEK

Next week, we will look at the story of how God raises up a seemingly unimportant shepherd to replace Saul as king over Israel. Before your next group meeting, be sure to read through the following personal study, complete the exercises, and memorize the key verse for the session.

VIDEO NOTES ANSWER KEY

Israel, king / child, Samuel / envisioned, outcome /
wrong, follow / misrepresenting / lifestyles



PERSONAL STUDY

Every session in this guide contains a personal study to help you make meaningful connections between your life and what you are learning each week. Take some time after your group meeting each week to read through this section and complete the personal study. In total, it should take about one hour to complete. Some people like to spread it out, devoting about ten to fifteen minutes a day. Others choose one larger block of time during the week to work through it in one sitting. There is no right or wrong way to do this! Just choose a plan that best fits your needs and schedule and then allow the Scripture to take root in your heart.

KNOW THE STORY

God wanted to be Israel's only king, but the people wanted a human king just like the nations around them. So God determined to honor the people's request for a human king in the lower story without altering his ultimate upper-story objective. If the new king followed the plan of God, things would go well. But if he misrepresented God's name, the Lord would intervene.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons

do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”

But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. 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. 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. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.” . . .

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. 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.”

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, “Listen to them and give them a king” (1 Samuel 8:4–9, 19–22).

Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.’ But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, ‘No, appoint a king over us.’ So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.”

When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri’s

clan was taken. Finally Saul son of Kish was taken. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?"

And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies."

They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes (1 Samuel 10:17-25).

The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth Aven. When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

“What have you done?” asked Samuel.

Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikmash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

“You have done a foolish thing,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command” (1 Samuel 13:5–14).

Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: “I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.”

When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

"Enough!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night."

"Tell me," Saul replied.

Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.' Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

"But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:7-23).

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1. How did God to respond to Samuel when the people asked for a king?

2. How did Saul react when he was chosen by lot to be king?

3. How did Saul disobey the Lord after his victory over the Philistines?

4. How did Saul disobey the Lord after his victory over the Amalekites?

5. How did Samuel respond when Saul claimed that he *had* obeyed the Lord?

UNDERSTAND THE STORY

As a small child, Samuel responded to God’s call with a humble invitation: “Speak LORD, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9–10). This simple response to God’s voice is one of the touchstone moments in Scripture. It models the proper response to the call of God . . . a response marked by a teachable willingness to obey the direction and guidance of the Lord.

Unfortunately, the people of Israel generally failed to make this same kind of response to God. Again and again in their history, we find that *listening to God* is the last thing on their minds and *obeying his word* the last thing in their hearts. Just as they were trapped by their lust for idolatry into the worship of other gods, they have now grown envious of the political might and power of the surrounding nations. All the other countries of the world have kings, but they only have priests and prophets leading them. Kings wore regal robes and jeweled crowns. Priestly garments were quite simple and drab in comparison. Kings could make decisions on the spot. Religious leaders checked in with God first and conferred among themselves.

So, the Israelites demand to have a human monarch of their own. Samuel warns they will ultimately become slaves to this king whom they so desperately desire. But the people persist, so God grants their request. At first, the Israelite experiment in kingship seems to go well. Saul seems to listen to the voice of God. But it doesn't take long for things to change. Saul won all of his early battles, but it was his failure to fully destroy the Amalekites that led to his ultimate rejection as king. So much for godly leadership for God's people!

1. What do the stories you have read this week reveal about willingly obeying God?

2. How do these stories help you understand the importance of listening to God?

LIVE THE STORY

God calls his people to reflect his *character* to the world. When Saul disobeyed the Lord, his actions misrepresented that

divine character. As the new king of God's chosen nation, Saul caused people to get the wrong idea of what God was really like. By plundering the possessions of the Amalekites, he became like all the other kings. Just as Saul and the Israelites were God's representatives, so we—as New Testament people—are the representatives of God today. We are the very "body of Christ." In truth, most of the people in our world will get their take on God from *us*. We may be the only Bible they ever read. By living splendidly unlike everyone else, we give them a glimpse into what life in God's community is like. God doesn't want us to be just like everyone else. He wants us to be known by our love. He wants us to look like Jesus.

1. What are the benefits of being different from the world?
What are the challenges?

2. What is one action you will take this week to put what you've learned into practice?

TELL THE STORY

The goal of this study is not only for you to understand the story of the Bible but also for you to share it with others. So, one day this week around a meal or your dinner table, have an intentional conversation about the topic of this session with family or friends. During your time together, read 1 Samuel 2:1-11, and then use the following question for discussion:

What are some ways you have seen God demonstrate that he is in control?

Ask God this week to help you fully embrace the story of King Saul. Also, spend a few minutes each day committing the key verse to memory: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).