

**T h e  
H a r d  
G o o d**

**STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO**



# The Hard Good

Showing Up When  
You Want to Shut Down

STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO  
SIX SESSIONS

L I S A W H I T T L E

*The Hard Good Study Guide*

© 2021 by Lisa Whittle

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To my many incredible sisters out there, allowing Jesus to make much of your life despite the hard: you inspire me. I'll never forget the stories you've told me at conferences, in DM's, emails, and over coffee. Most of all, know that He has seen every tear.

And to my sister, Kat Armstrong, whose fingerprints are all over this study guide: Thank you for your invaluable contribution. You have made it richer by your commitment to the Word of God and belief in this message. Thank you for loving and believing in me, as a friend. I feel more than blessed to have had such an astute student of the Bible and incredibly gifted woman as a vital contributor to this project.





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# Thanks for Showing Up

## *(A Message from Lisa)*

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My friend, I do not take it lightly that you are here for this study in the midst of your busy schedule. Life gives us plenty of opportunities to push necessary healing aside by providing overload and weariness, but I'm so glad you have chosen this pursuit. My prayer is that this study will not deplete you, but instead, strengthen you. With God, hard things in life aren't for nothing if we stay in the process of transformation with Him.

Good news! We have a lot of incredible progress ahead of us in the next six weeks. I am so excited about what God is going to do in our midst. We are going to look at two kings, predominately: Saul and David—and in each of them, there is so much us. But I ask you not to be afraid if you find yourself resonating with Saul, more than you even hoped. While David may be the person we wish to be, Saul is much more often a picture of how we are. The amazing thing about having examples in the Bible we can identify with is for this very purpose: reflection, that we might be able to spot important places to become more, better, different with the help of God.

As we start this study, know that you are not alone. We are a tired bunch, and I don't just mean needing sleep. We are worn down by life. We are brokenhearted and yet still, trying our best. We share that same frustration of dealing with growth-stunting internal issues, over and over without getting anywhere. We all want to get close to God or we wouldn't be here. I take those things seriously. I wouldn't dream of wasting your valuable time if I didn't think this study could truly help you.

The struggles to live in this world full of hardships, including the battle within our own minds and hearts, is real.

But even as we share that community, I want us to look forward with hope: to learn the true, biblical definition of good. To be able to see our hard places and instead of letting them overtake us, let God do a work inside of us to help us live the future-focused words, “what now?” To watch us become God’s woman in a new way—more Kingdom usable than we’ve ever been before.

These are the things (and more) *The Hard Good* study is here for.

I am praying, even now, that this study will serve you well—in the difficult places of your past you struggle to reconcile . . . the current tough spots you find yourself in . . . and the things you so deeply want to break free from that chip away at the abundance of life God offers you but you can’t seem to grab onto.

May He meet you here, from the very start.

Jesus is Everything.



# How to Use This Guide

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## RESOURCES

- All-in-One Study Guide/Video Access: For your greater convenience with this study, you will only need *The Hard Good* study guide because it includes streaming video access (look on the inside cover). Your group can still use the DVD to watch the videos if you choose, but each participant will have access to all the video teachings with her study guide—for catch-up, refreshers, or those times months after a study has ended that you wish you could go back and hear that one session teaching again!
- Book: *The Hard Good*: Although optional, you are encouraged to have a copy of *The Hard Good* book, as the book and guide were designed together to help you with deeper insights.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

Because real growth in any study happens during your small-group time, in addition to Lisa's video teaching, each session includes group discussion. You'll be able to process what you're learning, ask questions, and learn from group members too. In addition,

you'll have an opportunity to pray as a group and read Scripture together. This study guide includes group discussion elements we think will be a bonus to your group dynamics.

1. Group prayers. Your whole group can read aloud the prayers, which encourage and equip women to value prayer and learn to pray out loud.
2. Scripture reading from select Psalms. Since most of this study will be on the life of Saul and David, we've chosen a psalm of David that can be read together as a group before the video teaching as a way to unify our hearts as we prepare to study.
3. Prayer blessings. At the end of each session, you'll see a prayer for the group leaders to pray over all the group members. This is an opportunity for you to experience what it is like to receive blessings prayed over you. According to Baker's *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, "the blessing served as a guide and motivation to pursue a course of life within the blessing."<sup>1</sup>



## PERSONAL STUDY

The personal study lessons are designed to get you into God's Word to study the life of Kings Saul and David from the book of 1 Samuel. Your three-part Bible lesson can be completed between group sessions. Each lesson will take approximately 45 minutes of total individual study time divided into three 10–20-minute parts. It's up to you whether to work through the material one part at a time over the course of a few days or all in one sitting. Do what's best for your schedule and learning style.



## RED THREAD REALITY

Every personal study session will end with a few notes about the passages you've been reading and studying. This will offer some deeper biblical insights, context, and background to help define that red thread that connects all of God's Word to Jesus as well as connecting us to it.



## GROUP LEADERS

Check out the leader's guide in the back of this book for tips on creating environments where every group member feels safe to be honest and to grow spiritually.





## SESSION 1

# *Getting Out of Your Own Way* Group Time

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### PRAY

*Pray aloud as a group.*

Lord, I want to show up for my life, even when things are hard. I need Your peace and strength. Be near to me when things get uncomfortable. Assure me of Your love. Use this time with my sisters to build my faith.

Spirit of God, be my counselor as I study the Bible.

In Jesus' name, amen.



### SHARE

*Take a few minutes to go around and allow group members to introduce themselves and answer the questions below.*

1. What brought you to this group?
2. What do you hope to gain from this study?



*Invite someone to read aloud as group members prepare their hearts for Lisa's teaching.*

## Psalm 25

*Theme: A prayer for defense, guidance, and pardon.*

### A Psalm of David

- <sup>1</sup> In you, LORD my God,  
I put my trust.
- <sup>2</sup> I trust in you;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- <sup>3</sup> No one who hopes in you  
will ever be put to shame,  
but shame will come on those  
who are treacherous without cause.
- <sup>4</sup> Show me your ways, LORD,  
teach me your paths.
- <sup>5</sup> Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long.
- <sup>6</sup> Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,  
for they are from of old.
- <sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth  
and my rebellious ways;  
according to your love remember me,  
for you, LORD, are good.
- <sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
- <sup>9</sup> He guides the humble in what is right  
and teaches them his way.
- <sup>10</sup> All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful  
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

- <sup>11</sup> For the sake of your name, LORD,  
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.
- <sup>12</sup> Who, then, are those who fear the LORD?  
He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.
- <sup>13</sup> They will spend their days in prosperity,  
and their descendants will inherit the land.
- <sup>14</sup> The LORD confides in those who fear him;  
he makes his covenant known to them.
- <sup>15</sup> My eyes are ever on the LORD,  
for only he will release my feet from the snare.
- <sup>16</sup> Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
for I am lonely and afflicted.
- <sup>17</sup> Relieve the troubles of my heart  
and free me from my anguish.
- <sup>18</sup> Look on my affliction and my distress  
and take away all my sins.
- <sup>19</sup> See how numerous are my enemies  
and how fiercely they hate me!
- <sup>20</sup> Guard my life and rescue me;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
for I take refuge in you.
- <sup>21</sup> May integrity and uprightness protect me,  
because my hope, LORD, is in you.
- <sup>22</sup> Deliver Israel, O God,  
from all their troubles!



## LEARN

### Session 1 Video Teaching (12:00 min.)

*Gather your group together to watch Lisa's first video teaching. You can use the outline and notes sections below to keep track of what you are learning.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The real reason we don't seem to make traction in life is not because life is hard. It's because when life is hard we bail on God. God wants to take us through hard things and refine us through the process.**

How to show up for your life when life gets hard:

- Redefine "good" according to God's Word.
- Become aware of the "cycle of offense."
- Hard things → Anger/hurt → Offended → Progression is blocked.
- Make peace with your life.
- Stop running away.

Our hard places are helping us while we are looking to push them away.



4. According to Lisa, there are some misleading messages floating around that counterfeit God's truth about our circumstance. Which of the following messages distract you the most? Check all that apply and share with your group.

You can do hard things, in and of yourself.

You are good, just as you are.

You create your own "good" life.

5. According to God's Word, your Savior is helping you through the hard good. Which of the following Bible truths resonate with you the most? Share with your group.

God is good. Therefore, hard things that lead you to God will be good for you.

Growth is good. That means process and progress are important.

A good life is one of Kingdom usability.

I'm honestly struggling to believe anything good can come from the hard I'm experiencing.

I have doubts and concerns, but I'm willing to give God a chance to bring the good from the hard.

6. How do you respond to God and others when you are frustrated with your life? How do you think that impacts their lives?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. According to Lisa, making peace with life isn't about saying you agree with decisions that were out of your control; making peace with life means coming to terms with realities, doing your absolute best, and leaving the rest up to God. What might you be holding onto that you could release to God?



## PRAY

*This prayer is for your group leader to pray over your group as a blessing. This is your opportunity to receive a blessing from the Lord before you pray for one another and take prayer requests. Prayer blessings are a biblical practice of loving others by calling on the Lord on their behalf.*

Lord of transformation, help us embrace the change You want to bring to our lives.

Lord of comfort, comfort us when we feel uncomfortable with the refining process.

Lord of love, remind us, all things are working together for our good.

Spirit of God, do your good work in us; we're ready.

In Jesus' name, amen.



## SESSION 1

# *Getting Out of Your Own Way* Personal Study

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### CONTEXT AND SETTING

If you've ever walked into a movie late, you know the frustration of coming into a scene you don't quite understand. Since movies at the movie theater don't hit the pause button when I need to go to the bathroom, I've even hesitated to drink too much while watching a movie in a theater, simply because I know even the 3–5 minutes I'll miss can be crucial for me to understand the context of what is actually happening in the story!

When it comes to studying biblical narrative, diving into a passage without proper context can make us feel like this and create problematic understanding. Context and setting are even more important because we are so far removed from the cultural traditions and lifestyles of the Bible. So, let's catch you up on where we are in God's story before we dive too deeply into the drama and lives of two major players, Saul and David.

The Bible is a collection of divinely inspired manuscripts written over thousands of years by at least forty different authors. Together, the manuscripts make up tens of thousands of verses, sixty-six books, and two testaments. But the Bible is really just one big story, God's story of redemption. From Genesis to Revelation we will encounter stories, songs, poems, wisdom literature, letters, and even apocalyptic prophecies. But all in all, everything we read is to help us understand God's love. I hope if you take only one thing away from this study or anything I ever write it will be this: His heart is for you.



3. List at least 10 things you learned about Saul in 1 Samuel 9:1–10:12.


Saul was just looking for his lost donkeys and ended up being anointed as the future king of God’s people. No big deal, right? He went searching for lost property and came back with the task of launching an untried monarchy and carrying a whole nation on his shoulders. I feel a bit blown away just reading his story.

You might know a thing or two about showing up for something specific and inheriting unexpected responsibilities. Or maybe everything on your plate is exactly what you anticipated, but keeping all the plates spinning has become a challenge. Maybe right now you are in the middle of pursuing something with expectations and are just now realizing, you have no idea how “this” is going to turn out! As with Saul, God knows what He is assigning us to, and He’s in every part of the assignment. We simply cannot choose our purpose or seek it hard enough to make it clear. We have nothing to do with our purpose, but everything to do with being available to be used!

4. Take a few minutes to list the roles or titles God has assigned to you and the responsibilities that come with each one:

Role/Title	Responsibilities

Now, circle the titles you never expected, but have found yourself wearing the “uniform and name badge” every day. Put an X next to the responsibilities you struggle with. This can be struggle because you feel ill-equipped, or it can be simply because the tasks are really hard. Listen, God knew when He put you inside those circles and He’s got you at every X. He doesn’t abandon us to our circumstances, He goes with us into them and remains there until we realize all we’re really tasked with is showing up. Our responsibilities, joyful or burdensome, don’t have the final word. God does.

And now I want to invite you to take at least one minute to write out a prayer to God about the role in your life that’s heaviest on your heart. Be honest about your approach to this role and confess if you’ve assumed your own power in it. Ask God to meet your need and lead you. He will, friend. He put you there to begin with.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## INTO THE SCRIPTURE

God provided many signs that Saul was called to kingship in 1 Samuel 10:3–9. Some were from Samuel’s prophecies, some in the narrator’s commentary, and some we can observe as readers.

*Read 1 Samuel 10:3–9.*

1. List all the reasons Saul was chosen to be the first king of Israel from 1 Samuel 10:3–9.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What evidence do you see in your own life that God is equipping you to be used for His glory and your good?

This had to be a lot to take in for Saul, but we know very little about what was going on in his heart and mind as he grappled with life-changing news. Although we cannot know for sure, it might help us to imagine Saul’s internal dialogue as he absorbed his future as king.

3. How do you think Saul was processing all of this?

*Read 1 Samuel 10:9–16.*

Saul's life was not the only one being changed by the installment of the monarchy. His friends, family, and neighbors would also be processing the shift. Serving as the first king of Israel meant that Saul's life would be nothing like he had assumed, and it meant everyone around him would have opinions of the monarchy and all his decisions to come.

4. Based on 1 Samuel 10:9–16, what insecurities and concerns do you think Saul was dealing with?

Self-talk is that internal dialog you have with yourself, and while it can be positive or negative, studies have shown that most of our conversations with ourselves are not uplifting. Negative self-talk is certainly something I've struggled with in the past. Taking inventory of what we say and how we communicate to ourselves can be revealing and help us to course correct.

5. What internal dialogue best represents your self-talk? Check all that apply.

- I'm not as qualified as I should be. Someone else could do it better.
  
- I've messed up things like this before.
  
- I'm not sure I can live up to everyone else's expectations.
  
- I'm not sure I can live up to my own expectations.

- Life is just too hard.
  
- This could go wrong, and this could go wrong, and this could go wrong too.
  
- What if I heard God wrong and this isn't His plan for me?
  
- Other:

6. Why do you think Saul didn't tell his uncle about the matter of the kingdom?

7. Who's a safe person you could confide in when you are struggling with insecurities?

Saul conveniently skipped the part about being king when retelling his story to his uncle. We can't know for sure why Saul did this, but we will see as the story goes on that Saul really struggled with insecurities and often skipped out on the hard parts of life, work, and leading. As a result, Saul didn't allow God to transform his character. He just kept bailing when things got hard. The implications to our own life may feel a little too close for comfort, but stick with me here. Admitting our likeness to Saul can also lead us to seeing where we can take a better path. Though the world pitches to us gains of the tangible kind, the true goal of life isn't about getting better things; it's





## PERSONAL APPLICATION

Remember the cycle of offense from the video? Remember how we talked about how our surprise or disappointment can cause offense at things God never meant for us to be offended by, but really He meant for them to be portions of our transformation experience with Him? In case you forgot, here it is again:

**Hard thing → Anger/Hurt → Offended → Blocked progression**

The big question you have to answer today is this, “Am I offended by my life?”

I recognize that this is not easy and for good reason. It’s a positive step to have to labor over an issue that is a potential game-changing breakthrough for you. If you find offense in your life, where is it coming from? What if by being willing to look at this right now you are breaking free from something that has stifled you for far too long? Do you believe that is possible? Why or why not?

See, the very things that Saul could not control were the things that kept him from realizing his potential as God’s man. Every time something changed for Saul and God wanted to grow him through it, there was some form of resistance or disobedience. There are always two ways we deal with change—positively, or negatively, and two ways we receive it: through willingness or denial.

*Read 1 Samuel 10:17–19.*

1. As Samuel, the great priest and prophet of Israel, gathered all the people together for the announcement of Saul’s kingship, there were different reactions to the news. In what ways did Samuel’s announcement of Saul’s kingship potentially work against Saul’s ability to rule his people?

2. How could Samuel's announcement of Saul's kingship work for Saul's governance?

*Read 1 Samuel 10:20–27.*

Think about this passage for just a moment with me. Was Saul hiding *before* the gathering or *after* people were already huddled together? Did people see him hide? Is that how they knew where to find him? Was this common in this culture or just for Saul?

3. Now, let's revisit the cycle of offense for a minute and see if we can make better sense out of how Saul's actions might be more in line with our own than we realize. Can you define the cycle in terms of what you know of Saul's response to God's invitation to be his king? How did each step in the cycle reveal itself in Saul's story?

Hard thing → \_\_\_\_\_

Anger/Hurt (aka Fear) → \_\_\_\_\_

Offense → \_\_\_\_\_

Blocked progression → \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_

This story could also serve as a metaphor for so many of our chosen responses to being called out, but perhaps none quite like how we respond when we are unprepared or unwilling to lead.

Saul chose to hide when he should have been showing up in his life with the confidence that God had chosen him and that the people had begged for a king.

4. Why do you think Saul hid in the baggage? Can you relate? Why or why not?
  
5. Is there anything you are hiding or running from in life? If so, what would you feel comfortable sharing with your group? If not, what has helped you face your circumstances?

The truth is, you can't be used by God when you are hiding from your calling. You just can't. My friend, if you want true and lasting fulfillment in your life, you need to get out of your place of hiding and start living into your potential as a Kingdom builder. And please . . . don't overcomplicate this. There is much to do right around us. Saul teaches us an important lesson about how to respond to a call to lead at home, at work, or in ministry; turning away from God never bears good fruit. If He's chosen you to lead, He will equip you to follow through in His plan.

According to 1 Samuel 10:26–27, there were two types of men joining him on his way home to start his new role as king. List both types of men and write out how they responded to his leadership.

Type	Response

I feel for Saul. His position polarized people around him. His naysayers surely compounded his preexisting insecurities. Read how 1 Samuel 10:26–27 sheds light on Saul's response to the "scoundrels" who "despised him." In my translation (NIV) it says, "Saul kept silent."

6. What are you keeping silent about? What insecurities are keeping you from using your voice?

Remember, you will determine the extent of your usability for the Kingdom of God in how you respond to the process—just like Saul did. We all have the gift of free will, yes, even in the midst of hard circumstances.

And that is where this study starts: helping us get out of God's way and letting our hard circumstances be worked through for the good God intended.



## RED THREAD REALITY

The book of 1 Samuel tells the story of four key people who each had hard good callings to respond to:

1. Hannah—Samuel's mom
2. Samuel—One of the priests and prophets in Israel
3. Saul—The hesitant and faltering first king of Israel
4. David—The imperfect man after God's own heart and the greatest king in Israel's long history

Like many of the Bible stories about great men used by God, this one begins with a godly woman's prayers. Hannah's story is found in 1 Samuel 1 and her prayer in chapter two "becomes a proleptic summary of the themes that fill the book as a whole: Hannah's prophetic son looks forward to the emergence of kingship in Israel, a victory David will live to celebrate as historical reality."<sup>2</sup>

Hannah's presence at the beginning of this book cannot be understated. In many ways she is supposed to point us to Mary of Nazareth, who also prayed an all-important prayer that led to another great man, Jesus.

Notice how these two women's famous prayers are linked.

**Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46–55.**

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

**Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2.**

My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.

The bows of the warriors are broken but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.

The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.

For the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S; on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

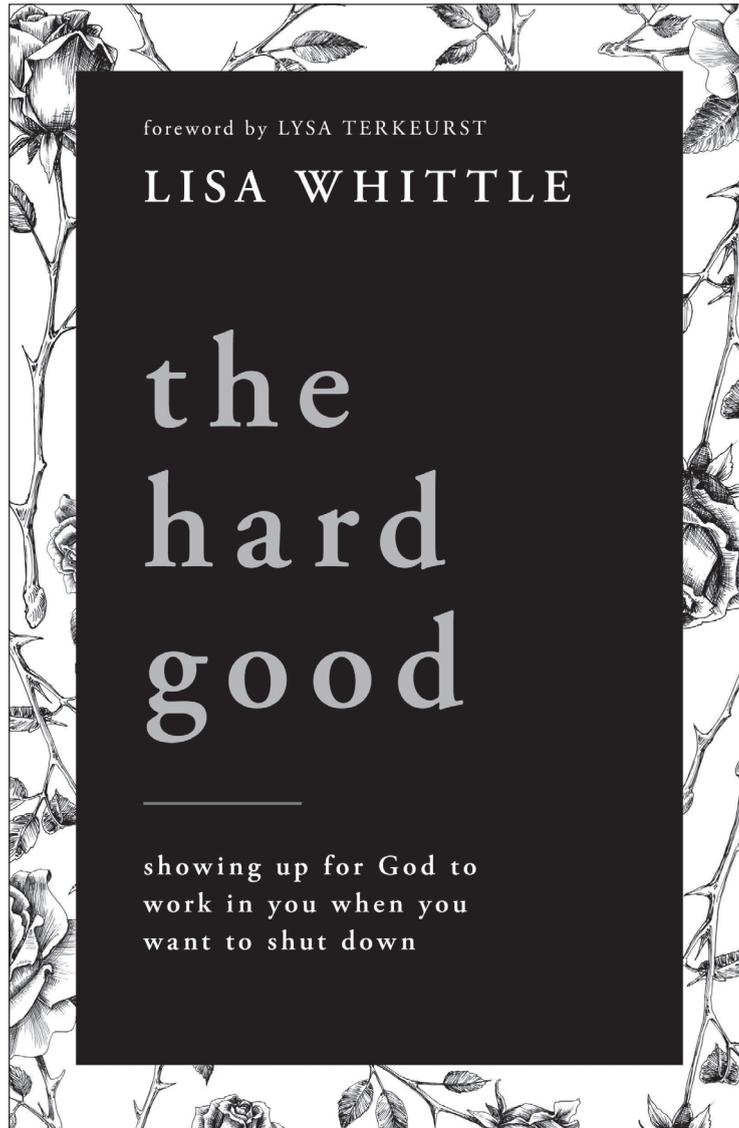
He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.

The tension of the hard good is very present in the books of First and Second Samuel. We see 1 Samuel begins with Hannah's desire, but inability to have children carries throughout the book of 1 Samuel as the kings installed to rescue God's people fall short of their roles. The book is filled with examples of unrealized potential and a resistance to accept God's refining process, the same tensions we feel in the hard good process. Thankfully, none of the heartaches or sins of God's people and His leaders keeps them, or us, from experiencing God's grace.

***What is the red thread reality? Tension is hard but endurance through tension is where good comes alive.***

# companion book

to enrich your study experience



Available wherever books are sold