

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF NOV 8 - NOV 14 •

MONDAY // 1 SAMUEL 1-2

During the time of the judges, Israel reached a spiritual low point. The priesthood was corrupt, as the behavior of Eli's sons reveals, and many people turned away from the faith of their forefathers. However, from the beginning of 1 Samuel, it becomes evident that a remnant of faithful Israelites still remained. First Samuel 1-2 describes the fervent prayers of Hannah, a faithful woman who was desperate for a child. Hannah pleaded with God to give her a son whom, in return, she would give back to God in commitment to His service. God answered Hannah's prayer. She gave birth to Samuel, who was dedicated to God for a lifetime of service as she promised. Samuel was the last judge of Israel, and to this day his mother is an example of the self-sacrificial nature God expects from His children.

TUESDAY // 1 SAMUEL 3; 8

From the time he was a little boy, Samuel served as an apprentice to Eli, the priest. During this time, God called Samuel to a life of prophetic ministry. While resting near the ark, Samuel heard the Lord speak to him. God took the initiative, as He always does, and after some confusion about whose voice he heard, Samuel submitted to God. Without yet knowing what God was specifically asking, Samuel enlisted himself into service. Over the years, Samuel continued to grow in his relationship with God and in his responsibilities to the nation during a transitional and unstable time in their history. The people voiced their desire to be more like their neighboring nations, who were all ruled by kings, and they hoped that becoming a monarchy would give them strength against their enemies. So they asked Samuel to appoint a king to govern them—a request that flew in the face of their identity as God's chosen people, set apart from all other nations. God granted their request, but considered it simply another of the many rebellious choices of Israel.

WEDNESDAY // 1 SAMUEL 9-10

The Israelites rebelled against God by demanding a king, and Samuel, with God's approval, granted their request. Even though a monarchy was not God's desire for the people, God still took it upon Himself to select who would be the nation's first king. God worked through a series of seemingly unrelated events to reveal who that king would be. Saul, in the process of searching for some lost donkeys, solicited the help of Samuel. All of this happened according to God's predicted plan, which revealed to Samuel that Saul was God's appointed leader. From the beginning of Saul's story, though, we see hints of the life-long struggle that would plague his leadership—a lack of trust in God (9:21; 10:22). Saul's life is a sad story of unrealized potential, but it's an important reminder of God's desire that we trust Him and His plans for our lives, resulting in our unwavering devotion.

THURSDAY // 1 SAMUEL 13-14

One of the consequences of Israel's new monarchy was a renewed conflict with the Philistines, Israel's enemy neighbor. Saul experienced military victory, which encouraged the people in their ability to fight back against the Philistines. First Samuel 13-14 draw a comparison between the leadership of Saul and Jonathan, Saul's son and commander of half of Israel's army. Saul was consumed by his own selfish goals, to the point that he ignored God's instruction and usurped the role of priest, offering a sacrifice that displeased God. This pattern of disobedience would lead to an abrupt end to Saul's reign, when he would be replaced by David, "a man after [God's] own heart" (13:14, ESV). Jonathan, on the other hand, acknowledged trust in God's power and leadership, seeking confirmation from God before acting. The lives of these two men are a reminder that what you believe about God determines the actions you take in your relationship with Him.

FRIDAY // 1 SAMUEL 15-16

Saul's repeated disobedience had disastrous consequences for him and his family. God equated Saul's failure to obey with idolatry, and for that, he would remove him as king. This set the stage for David, who would go down in history as Israel's greatest king. In 1 Samuel 13:14, Samuel described the next king as a man after God's own heart, but very little else is told about David other than his unassuming build and his work as a shepherd. That didn't matter, though, because God chose him to be king and anointed him with His Holy Spirit, and those were the only qualifications that mattered. The same is true of God's people today—God has chosen you to serve Him, and He has equipped you for that task by giving you the presence of His very Spirit. Like David, the Holy Spirit is committed to making you into a person after God's own heart, and all you have to do is surrender in order to allow Him to do so.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO