

God hears Hannah's cry: Samuel is born

The people of Israel want to be like all the other nations

Israel's first king, Saul

Samuel tells Saul that God has rejected him as king

Discussion questions:

1. 1 Samuel 1 (The Story, pp.129-131) tells of Hannah's heartbreaking account of barrenness and how her prayer for a child is finally answered. What strikes you about Hannah's character and faith?
2. What does Eli teach Samuel about listening to God (1 Samuel 3:1-10; The Story, pp. 131-132)? What can we learn about communicating with God as we see Samuel's story unfold?
3. According to 1 Samuel 8 (The Story, pp.135-136), how does Samuel feel about the leaders of Israel's request to give them a king so they can be like all the other nations? How does God feel about it?
4. How does Samuel's description of the consequences of having an earthly king instead of a heavenly King parallel the actions of those who govern in our modern world today?
5. God's Upper Story plan is for him alone to rule as King over his people. In the Lower Story, the people insist on having an earthly king as their ruler. God gives in to their request. Do you believe God still allows us to have our way (on occasion) even if it is not his perfect will for us? If so, give an example of what this can look like.
6. Saul does not follow God's instructions, which leads to Samuel telling him that he will lose his throne because God has rejected him as king. One of Saul's big mistakes was distorting and misrepresenting God as cruel and greedy rather than showing he is just and holy. Why is God so concerned about his people giving an accurate portrayal of who he is? What can we do to present God to the world with greater clarity and accuracy?
7. God's desire is to reveal his presence, power, and plan to the world and thus restore people's relationship with him. How do you see God do each of these in this chapter of The Story?

Homework: Just like the people of Israel in Samuel's day and junior high school kids today, we can be prone to imitate and follow bad examples. Think through your behaviors, practices, shopping patterns, clothing choices, language, hobbies...anything you might do because someone else does it. If you identify something that is unhealthy, ungodly, or offensive, commit to ending that behavior.

For next week, please read Chapter 11 of The Story (1 Samuel 16-18, 24, 31; 2 Samuel 6, 22; 1 Chronicles 17; Psalm 59)