The last verse in the Book of Judges—a book that chronicles the downward spiral of disobedience of those who were called to be radically different as the people of God—is one of the most depressing verses in the Bible: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Judg. 21:25).

Is this not a fitting definition of sin? In this one verse, we see the prideful root of self-lordship, self-exaltation, and self-determination at the core of all our rebellion. We are, in our own minds, the gods of our own universe. And as such, we have the right to choose whatever is right and wrong for ourselves, and anything that imposes some authority over us other than our own autonomous minds, hearts, and desires is a constraint that must be thrown off.

As sinners, we are like the Israelites of old, convinced of our own truth, our own ideas, and our own wisdom. Our sin has blinded us to what is truly good and right, and it’s precisely because of this blindness that we need a true king. We need a king who tells us the truth, guides us with justice, and leads us in righteousness. And we need a king who can open our eyes to all these things and more. But because we are enslaved by our own desires, the true king we need must not only be our ruler but also our rescuer.

In Jesus, we find this King—the One before whom every knee will bow and whose greatness every tongue will eventually confess. In Jesus, the true King has come. He is the King of love as well as the King of power. In Jesus, and in Him alone, will we finally find all our desires for peace, security, and wholeness met.

What is left for us, then, is to acknowledge that every other king we seek to enthrone is only a substitute for Jesus. Far better is for us to trust in Him not only as our rescuer but also as our ruler and to acknowledge that all authority has been given to Him.
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A Word from the Editor

Brian Dembowczyk
Managing Editor—The Gospel Project
Author of Gospel-Centered Kids Ministry
and Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth

In this volume of The Gospel Project, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel’s heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them—one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God’s character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God’s people wanted and needed, each one proving God’s warnings true. Bookending God’s people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God’s people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God’s people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?
About the Writers

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT
A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2018  
**In the Beginning**  
Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)  
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)  
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)

Winter 2018-19  
**Out of Egypt**  
God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)  
God Provides for His People (Exodus)  
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)

Spring 2019  
**Into the Promised Land**  
God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)  
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)  
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)

Summer 2019  
**A Kingdom Provided**  
God Provides a King (1 Samuel)  
God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Samuel; Psalms)  
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Ecclesiastes)

Fall 2019  
**A Nation Divided**  
God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)  
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)  
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)

Winter 2019-20  
**A People Restored**  
God Sustains His People (Daniel)  
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)  
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)

© 2019 LifeWay Christian Resources
Spring 2020  
*Jesus the Messiah*
- Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
- Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
- Jesus Among the People (Gospels)

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Summer 2020  
*Jesus the Servant*
- Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
- Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
- Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)

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Fall 2020  
*Jesus the Savior*
- Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
- Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
- Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)

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Winter 2020-21  
*The Mission Begins*
- The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)
- Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)
- New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)

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Spring 2021  
*The Church United*
- Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)
- The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)
- Don’t Forget (Acts; Epistles)

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Summer 2021  
*All Things New*
- Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)
- Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)
- Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)
How to Use The Gospel Project Daily Discipleship Guide

God Rescues His Ark

SESSION 2

Gather with your group for Bible study and fellowship. Use the Group Time in your Daily Discipleship Guide to follow along and participate in the session. Mark up the Scripture passages, answer the questions, fill in the blanks, do the activities, write out questions and thoughts—Make this guide yours!

Point 1: God promises to provide an internally beloved son (2 Sam. 7:810).

• God makes a faith-stirring promise (2 Sam. 7:8-16). He tells David that He will provide a son who will be known as "my son" (v. 12), an eternity of peace and prosperity for the nation. He will keep His word (v. 10), and David will be the messenger to convey this promise to his son (v. 18). The people can look forward to an eternity of peace and prosperity with God's presence (v. 11), as He is the God of peace (v. 12). God makes a faith-stirring promise (2 Sam. 7:8-16). He tells David that He will provide a son who will be known as "my son" (v. 12), an eternity of peace and prosperity for the nation. He will keep His word (v. 10), and David will be the messenger to convey this promise to his son (v. 18). The people can look forward to an eternity of peace and prosperity with God's presence (v. 11), as He is the God of peace (v. 12).

Point 2: The people confuse the symbol of God's presence with His actual presence (2 Sam. 6:12-15).

• The Philistines line up in battle formation against Israel, and as the battle intensifies, Israel is defeated by the Philistines, who strike down about four thousand men on the battlefield. This is the result of the people confusing the symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, with God's actual presence. The Ark is a symbol of God's presence, but it is not God Himself. God is the one who protects the people (2 Sam. 6:2-3). The Ark of the Covenant is a symbol of God's presence. When the Ark is removed from the camp, the people panic and doubt God's protection (2 Sam. 6:6-7). This is a result of the people confusing the symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, with God's actual presence.

Point 3: God promises to provide an eternally beloved son (2 Sam. 7:14-16).

• God's promises for an eternally beloved son (2 Sam. 7:14-16). He promises that the Son will be an eternal son (v. 14), a son who is not replaced (v. 15), and a son who has a kingdom established forever (v. 16). This is a result of the people confusing the symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, with God's actual presence. God is the one who provides the eternal Son (v. 14), a Son who is not replaced (v. 15), and a Son whose kingdom is established forever (v. 16).

My Mission

Because we have experienced the mercy and grace of our King, we offer ourselves fully to His service so that we might reveal Jesus Christ to the world that others would find everlasting rest in His kingdom.

1. Who is Jesus to you? (Matthew 26:64)

2. What is your greatest challenge on today?

3. How will you respond to the loss of someone you love?

4. How can you grow in prayer as you grow in faith?

5. How can you grow in faith as you grow in prayer?

6. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?

7. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?

8. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?

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19. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?

20. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?

21. What are some symbols of Christianity we can revere without honoring the God behind the symbol?
Finally, Encourage One Another provides a brief guide for small groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. Meet up with a group once a week for fellowship, encouragement in the faith, and mutual accountability.
Memory Verses

“Hannah prayed: My heart rejoices in the Lord; my horn is lifted up by the Lord. My mouth boasts over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.”

—1 Samuel 2:1-2
God Calls a Prophet

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** God communicates His words through faithful servants who are dedicated to Him.

**MAIN PASSAGES:** 1 Samuel 1:20,24-28; 2:1-2,6-8; 3:15-21

Nothing is impossible for the Lord, but we sure are prone to think some things might even be beyond God’s reach. Whether it is pregnancy, protection, or provision, the things out of our own hands often feel out of God’s hands too. But nothing is beyond God. He is sovereign. He is omnipotent. He is omniscient. He is omnipresent. And what’s more, He is omnibenevolent, meaning He is all good and He works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

**?** What, or whom, does the world run to when life feels beyond their control?
Group Time

Point 1: A son is dedicated for God’s service (1 Sam. 1:20,24-28).

In the waning period of the judges, an Israelite named Elkanah had two wives: Hannah, who was barren, and Peninnah, who provoked Hannah because of it. This family worshiped yearly at the sanctuary in Shiloh, and on one occasion, Hannah reached her breaking point. Did she try to run away from her affliction? Did she lash out against her rival? No. She took her anguish and resentment to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to take notice of her affliction and to bless her with a son (1:9-11,16). And the Lord listened.

20 After some time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, because she said, “I requested him from the LORD.”

What must Hannah have believed about God to pray to Him under these circumstances?

24 When she had weaned him, she took him with her to Shiloh, as well as a three-year-old bull, half a bushel of flour, and a clay jar of wine. Though the boy was still young, she took him to the LORD’s house at Shiloh. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli.

26 “Please, my lord,” she said, “as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. 27 I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for, 28 I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.” Then he worshiped the LORD there.

When Hannah returned to the sanctuary with her son, she took joy in reminding Eli about her prayer and showing him God’s answer. Hannah’s joy and gratitude to the Lord, coupled with her faithfulness, led her to fulfill her vow. The Lord gave her a great gift, so she made good on her promise to give her son to the Lord. Samuel would serve the Lord all the days of his life. And the response was worship to the Lord (1:26-28).

How are you prone to view the gifts God gives to you?

Selfishly                  With Indifference                  As Precious                  With Purpose
Point 2: A son is reason for joy and worship (1 Sam. 2:1-2,6-8).

1 Hannah prayed:
   My heart rejoices in the Lord; my horn is lifted up by the Lord. My mouth boasts over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. 2 There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.

6 The Lord brings death and gives life; he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up. 7 The Lord brings poverty and gives wealth; he humbles and he exalts. 8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the trash heap. He seats them with noblemen and gives them a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the Lord’s; he has set the world on them.

What a gift from God a son or daughter is! Parents are given the blessing of loving and raising another image bearer of God for His glory. What an amazing joy and stewardship. Sadly, this truth is lost on many people who see children as a burden, with some even advocating for abortion or infanticide—both the murder of image bearers. Hannah’s heart, however, welled up with spontaneous praise at the gift of her child. We all need these reminders at times: Children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps. 127).

How can the church challenge the worldview that children are a burden and not a blessing from God?

Hannah thanked God for His gift and praised Him for His sovereignty and greatness even as she was leaving Samuel with Eli. Surely her heart was breaking, but that doesn’t appear to be her focus. Her heart was so full of thankfulness and praise to God. Perhaps this brought comfort and courage to her for what she was about to do. Or maybe she realized that the gift of this son was about more than just her. Perhaps she understood that her life and his life were ultimately about the glory of the Lord.

Why should the sovereignty of God over our circumstances lead us to joy and worship rather than bitterness and despair?

Voices from Church History

“This constitutes the pinnacle of human dignity, this is his glory and greatness: truly to know what is great and to cleave to it, and to seek after glory from the Lord of glory.”

–Basil the Great (c. 330-379)
Point 3: A son is called by God to share His words (1 Sam. 3:15-21).

Samuel’s surrogate family was less than ideal, marked by wickedness that God would not overlook. Eli’s two wayward sons, Hophni and Phinehas, took advantage of their position as priests at the sanctuary. Eli had expressed his misgivings about their sinful actions, but he did not stop them and allowed them to continue to despise the Lord.

Samuel, on the other hand, grew in stature and in favor with God and His people (1 Sam. 2:26). He knew who God was and faithfully served Him, but he didn’t know the Lord personally yet because he hadn’t heard from Him. Though Samuel lived in a time when a word from the Lord was rare, God would speak to this young man.

Special Revelation: Refers to God’s revealing Himself to humanity through historical events, His ________________, and through Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, human beings learn about God’s ________________, His will, His purpose for creation, and His plan of ________________.

15 Samuel lay down until the morning; then he opened the doors of the LORD’s house. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, 16 but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.” “Here I am,” answered Samuel. 17 “What was the message he gave you?” Eli asked. “Don’t hide it from me. May God punish you and do so severely if you hide anything from me that he told you.” So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything from him. Eli responded, “He is the LORD. Let him do what he thinks is good.”

19 Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and he fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied. 20 All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the LORD. 21 The LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because there he revealed himself to Samuel by his word.

What are some of the similarities and differences between Samuel’s prophetic message for Eli and sharing the gospel of Jesus with others?

Christ as Prophet: Jesus ________________ the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate teacher and has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is also God’s ultimate revelation of Himself, the very ________________ of God (John 1:1).
My Mission

Because we have experienced the power of the Word of God leading to our salvation, we listen carefully to what God says to us in His Word and share His truth to those around us.

- What will you pray about in light of the truth that God is sovereign, gracious, and good?
- How can your group support those who are struggling with faith in the midst of their life circumstances?
- What steps will you take to overcome your fear of sharing the gospel with others this week?

Voices from the Church

“Sin either stops up our ears from God’s voice or makes God’s voice terrifying rather than comforting. Sin causes us to fear God’s voice rather than love God’s voice.”

—Heath Thomas and J. D. Greear

Notes
Few of us are comfortable being vulnerable with others, especially not in public. For most of us, this means hiding or disguising the fear and hurt we feel. We would rather wear a plastic mask presenting the notion that we have our lives together and that we are good, happy even, when in reality our souls are being crushed within us. We don’t want others to see or to know that we are in pain or that we are barely holding on for dear life. To admit the struggle seems rather unspiritual, rather untrusting. And so, we press on with a stiff upper lip, hoping no one catches on to what we are really experiencing.

We can learn much from Hannah here, as she laid her soul bare before the Lord and whoever else happened to be worshiping near her. There was no plastic mask, no stiff upper lip, no façade. Only tears—many tears. Hannah was more concerned with presenting her pain before the Lord than presenting false strength before others. She was feeling crushed in spirit. She was in great need. So she wept.

What we need to realize is that the tears rolling down Hannah’s cheeks were not a sign of weakness but rather strength. Each tear, each sob, and each gasp for breath in between was an evidence of Hannah’s recognition that to be real and transparent before God is what matters. We might fool others, but we will never fool Him, so why try? It does no one any good. Instead, God wants us to be real with Him and with others. When we do, we show how God is able to meet us in our greatest times of need, in our greatest anguish, to provide mercy, grace, love, and comfort. And we show others that they are not alone in their pain and can also cry out to the Lord.

What are some ways you might be wearing a mask before others, or perhaps even before God?
Day 2: Read 1 Samuel 1:19-28

Hannah had carried the grief of not having a son for years (1:7), which makes it so surprising—shocking would be a better description—when she made good on her vow to dedicate Samuel and leave him to serve God with Eli. We expect her to make such a vow when she was barren; attempting to bargain with God from a place of such weakness would lead most of us to make lofty promises. But when she cradled her son in her arms and nursed him, we can imagine her maternal instincts kicking in to high gear and the rationalizing to begin.

We imagine this because it is what we likely would have done, or have done. Who would fault a mother for keeping her son in spite of a vow? But instead, we see the shocking reality of Hannah following through on her promise and leaving her young son with Eli. Surely this was not easy for Hannah. Surely she wept as she made her lonely journey home, with arms now empty. But what sustained Hannah was knowing God’s goodness to her in providing a son as she had asked, and that same goodness would sustain her as she gave God’s gift back to Him in worship.

What gift from God might you be holding onto instead of giving it back to God in worship? Why?

Day 3: Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11

We are a curious people. We remember for years the most minor of slights against us but are amnesiacs when it comes to remembering God’s graciousness to us even five minutes ago. Perhaps it is because deep down we believe we deserve God’s goodness to us.

Notice, however, how Hannah began her prayer. After leaving her son in the care of Eli, she did not offer up a prayer of lament or a prayer seeking comfort from God. She was no amnesiac. Instead, Hannah rejoiced in the Lord because she did not take God’s goodness for granted. She had not forgotten how God answered her prayer, how He had lifted her up. So now, she lifted Him up. Yes, Hannah also boasted in the victory over her enemies, but even that was not the foundation of her praise—God’s goodness was. Hannah understood that God was just as good when she cradled Samuel in her arms as when she placed him in the care of Eli.

How has God been good to you in recent days? Be as specific as possible and worship Him as He is due.
Day 4: Read 1 Samuel 2:12-36

Generations before Eli, the Lord had commanded Israelite parents to teach their children about Him and His ways (see Deut. 6:4-9). Not long after, we saw how tragic failing to obey this command could be when an entire generation arose who did not know the Lord (Judg. 2:10). Now we see again, in the case of Eli and his wicked sons, the importance of passing on the faith to the next generation (1 Sam. 2:12).

We are all accountable for our own sin and relationship with God. We cannot blame our parents for our rebellion against God any more than we can credit them for our salvation. Parents play a role, a key role, in our evangelism and discipleship, and yet, we are each accountable for ourselves and will stand before God as such. We are also held accountable in the role God has given us as stewards of the children He has entrusted to us. When Eli was very old, he implored his sons to refrain from their evil actions (vv. 22-25), but it seems he did not understand the gravity of his role in influencing the next generation toward God, such that he was counted guilty along with his sons (v. 29).

If you have children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren, how are you discipling them and pointing them to Jesus? If you do not, whom else might God have placed in your life to care for spiritually?

Day 5: Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21

What we read in 1 Samuel 3:1 should sting: “The word of the Lord was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.” In other words, God was rather quiet, and that quietness was likely related to the sinful corruption of the people in that day, namely, Eli’s sons. We live in a day, however, when God’s Word, in one sense, is abundant.

Many people have several copies of the Bible in their homes, in multiple translations. We have the Scriptures on our smartphones and can access them on a number of free websites. And yet, perhaps we too hold God’s Word in contempt. No, surely not like Eli’s sons—we would never say we despise or reject God’s Word—but by our neglect of it. How many days go by without us cracking open any of the copies of the Bible we have all around us? How often do we nibble on God’s Word rather than feast on it?

We may long for God to break the silence in our lives and world audibly, but our neglect of what He has spoken to us in His Word should cause us to tremble.

What is your plan to spend regular quality time in God’s Word?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- A son is dedicated for God’s service (1 Sam. 1:20,24-28).
- A son is reason for joy and worship (1 Sam. 2:1-2,6-8).
- A son is called by God to share His words (1 Sam. 3:15-21).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

When was the last time you rejoiced over something God did in your life? When has rejoicing led you to offer a sacrifice joyfully?

How often do you read God’s Word? In what ways is Bible reading a community project that stands to benefit others?

Notes

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UNIT 10

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5

SESSION 6

UNIT 11

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
3. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Large Catechism*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press, 1908), 44.

SESSION 4
JOURNEY THROUGH THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE WHEREVER YOU GO

Now you can study The Gospel Project anywhere. Just download the free app, and purchase the latest Daily Discipleship Guide or Leader Guide for your phone or tablet. Available in two Bible translations (CSB® or ESV).

To get started, just search your app store for The Gospel Project.
A Kingdom Provided

During the time of the judges, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It was evident that a king was needed, but he must be God’s king and desired for the right reason—to shepherd the people for the glory of God in the world. The Israelites, however, wanted a king in order to be like the nations around them. The impressive young king they received was soon rejected by God.

In the wake of a failed, self-centered king, God would raise up a man after His own heart to lead His people. This king stood for God’s honor, honored God’s authority, and wielded his authority with kindness, except when he didn’t. Though David was flawed and sinful, through him God would raise up the King whose kingdom is everlasting—Jesus, the Messiah.

David’s son, Solomon, rightly asked for wisdom as a gift from God in order to govern the people and to help them shine like a light to the nations. For all his wisdom, Solomon still made foolish choices, and this points to our need for a greater Wisdom—Jesus, the very Word of God made flesh for us.

What’s Next?

FALL 2019
Volume 5: A Nation Divided
God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)

WINTER 2019-20
Volume 6: A People Restored
God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Nehemiah; Esther; Malachi)

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