

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of November 10, 2019

Chapter 10: “Standing Tall, Falling Hard”



Key Events: the birth of Samuel and his service under the priest Eli, the Israelites ask for a king, the reign of King Saul

Key Characters: Samuel, Saul (see *The Story* page 489 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: 1 Samuel 1-4, 8-13, 15

1. Hannah waited many years for God to answer her request for a son. What role does the virtue of patience play in our Christian faith and lives? How do we gain patience?
2. As a loving response to God for granting a son, Elkanah and Hannah “gave (Samuel) to the Lord.” (page 131) What did this mean for Samuel? Give practical examples of how Christian parents “give” their children to the Lord.
3. Why was God so resolute in his judgment upon Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas? (pages 132-134) Note: Read 1 Samuel 2:12-26 for details about the behavior of Hophni and Phinehas.
4. The Israelites and the Philistines treated the Ark of the Covenant like a good-luck charm. (pages 133-134) How are God and symbols of God used like good-luck charms today? How do people, even Christians, try to manipulate God for personal gain?
5. For what reasons did the Israelites ask for a king? (pages 135-136) Consider how the Israelite’s spiritual condition impacted their desire for a king.
6. On pages 137-138, Samuel told Saul, “The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophecy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.” What changes occurred in Saul? Share personal experiences of changes that happened when you were placed into a position of responsibility.

7. What were the keys to Saul's success as king, and what led to his downfall? Discuss applications from Saul's rule for Christian leaders today.

8. Upper Story = God is present and working in the world to bring about the salvation of souls. Lower Story = God is present and working in my life every day to strengthen my faith in his plan and promises. Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 10.

Prayer Suggestions

- Ask God to help me see where I am being conformed to the world; confess, ask for forgiveness, and pray for God's power to follow his plan in my life.
- Pray for wisdom and strength to faithfully step up to the roles God has called me to fill.

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Study Guide Helps for Lesson 10

November 10, 2019

1. Patience in the Lord, or the lack of it, plays a huge role in a Christian's walk of faith – our level of patience impacts our reaction to life's circumstances every day. This virtue does not stand alone; it requires faith, trust, hope, and self-control to calmly wait for things still to come. For the Christian, patience is a fruit of faith (see Galatians 5:22-25), patience is tested and strengthened by God in the trials and sufferings we face, and patience is a key element in our prayer life (like Hannah). Patience in the Lord is not gained by human endeavor, it comes as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the gospel. Share experiences 1) when your patience was tested; 2) when your patience gave out; and/or 3) when God empowered you to patiently hold firm to God's will and timing.

2. As a child, Samuel was trained in God's Word and served in the priestly functions of the tabernacle in Shiloh. He grew to become a called minister of God his entire life, serving Israel in the role of judge (spiritual and civil leader) and prophet (spokesman of God). Christian parents "give" their children to the Lord by having the Holy Spirit work in their lives: 1) baptize them as babies to create faith; 2) train/instruct them in God's Word to grow faith; 3) establish family routines that include regular worship, Bible study, and prayer; 4) lovingly discipline children using law and gospel; 5) model and encourage God-pleasing living (good works); 6) live lives of repentance – confess sins, ask for/trust in Christ's forgiveness, forgive each other. Share other practical examples.

3. 1 Samuel 2:12-26: Hophni and Phinehas were priests, but they misused their power and position to satisfy their sinful desires and acquire earthly gain. They openly and blatantly broke God's laws for conducting sacrifices and other priestly duties, and they had sex with women who served at the tabernacle. Their father (and priest) Eli rebuked them, but they ignored him; Eli did not remove them from their positions. These men were supposed to be advocates and messengers of God's holy Word (see 1 Timothy 3:1-13), and their actions defied God and his Word and soiled the reputation of the priesthood. As an act of God's justice and for the sake of the priestly ministry, Eli's family was excluded from participation in this privileged position because of their unrepentant sin.

4. In this episode, the Ark was used without God's consent and instructions, thus it was used superstitiously. Today, people may view and use religious/Christian objects like decorations, jewelry, relics, artifacts, etc. superstitiously; that is, people believe the objects themselves grant special favors, fortune, or power. Certain religious actions and practices may also be superstitions. Christians may be tempted to manipulate God for his favor and good fortune. An example: If I go to church, do good things, do acts of service, etc. then God will smile on me and have good things happen. Share examples of superstitious tendencies among Christians. The Bible is clear in stating that God's favor is the result of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ alone.

5. Their stated reasons: They wanted to be like other nations and have a king/general to protect them from enemies and lead them in battle. The Israelites had gotten so used to living like the world (like the Canaanites), that they wanted to imitate earthly forms of government and human concepts of power and leadership. These stated reasons reveal spiritual weakness. A desire to be like everyone else usually means that we don't want to follow God's ways and we want to follow the world's ways instead. It also reveals doubt and dissatisfaction regarding God's protection and control in our lives. Rather than follow God, humans are the gods.

6. The Holy Spirit empowered Saul to prophecy along with some prophets (1 Samuel 10:10), and “God changed Saul’s heart” (10:9) giving him confidence and reliance in the Lord. Saul was given characteristics and skills needed for kingly leadership; he became confident, assertive, and decisive. Share personal experiences. Often times, a person becomes responsible and gains skills when placed into a situation requiring responsibility and commitment. Examples include the newly married, first-time parents, getting a new job or new work role, assuming service and leadership roles in the church and community, etc. Through the Spirit and God’s Word, these changes include spiritual growth and maturity, and the development of spiritual gifts as a child and servant of God.

7. The Lord made Saul successful when Saul aligned to God’s Word and instructions. Saul failed when his own ego and conceit led him to disregard God and disobey his instructions. The same goes for Christian leaders today. Share qualities of gospel-motivated servant-leadership based on these references: Mark 10:42-25 and 1 Peter 5:1-11.

8. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 10 that relate to our daily walk of faith.