

APRIL 2026 | DAY 19

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 1
1 Samuel 2
1 Samuel 3
Psalms 78

Judges left off with Israel's heartbreaking spiral into idol worship, violence, and chaos. The book of Samuel opens a window into God's plan to save the Israelites from themselves. Oddly, it begins with a woman named Hannah, grieved by her inability to bear children, weeping in a doorway.

Hannah's anguish turns toward joy when God gives her a son, Samuel, who becomes Israel's final judge and also a prophet. Like Samson's mother, Hannah dedicates her son to Yahweh from birth. Unlike Samson, Samuel remains attentive to God and leads Israel with integrity.

Hannah's family stays faithful, starkly contrasting Israel's failing priesthood. While she gives her son to serve Yahweh, the high priest Eli allows his sons to abuse their powerful position in the temple and take Yahweh's offerings for themselves.

Humble Samuel ascends, while the proud sons of Eli descend into darkness. This rise and fall establishes a key recurring pattern throughout the book. Watch the video to learn more about this rising-falling pattern introduced in Hannah's song, and see how her song introduces the literary structure for the rest of the book.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 20

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 4
1 Samuel 5
1 Samuel 6
1 Samuel 7
1 Samuel 8
Psalms 79

Israel may be done with Judges, but the pattern observed in Judges isn't quite done with Israel. In today's reading, the Israelites face off against their new nemesis, the Philistines. They experience a resounding defeat. At their next battle, the Israelites haul the ark of the covenant to the front lines, thinking they can brandish it like a magic talisman to guarantee victory. No such luck. Yahweh refuses to let Israel manipulate him. He allows the Philistines to thrash Israel's army and carry the ark into captivity.

This defeat triggers a repetition of the cycle found in Judges. The Philistines oppress the Israelites for 20 years. When the people cry out for help, their new judge, Samuel, leads them back to Yahweh. The Israelites repent of their idolatry, expressing their humility both physically and spiritually by fasting. As you'll see in today's video, fasting is a way of praying with your whole body.

Samuel encourages the people to trust Yahweh, who gives them victory over the Philistines. As time goes on, the Israelites grow dissatisfied with Samuel's leadership and demand a king to fight their battles instead. God gives them what they want, but he warns they're not going to like it.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 21

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 9
1 Samuel 10
1 Samuel 11
1 Samuel 12
Psalms 80

A young man from the territory of Benjamin heads out to the hill country to find his father's lost donkeys—and ends up Israel's king. Along the way, he's honored at a stranger's dinner, anointed as king by an old man, and caught up in a prophetic frenzy with traveling musicians. Meanwhile, the donkeys return home without him.

And so we meet Saul, Israel's first king. At first glance, he looks like a great candidate for the job. He's a strapping young man from a wealthy family who towers above everyone else. But as you'll learn in the video, this seemingly minor detail about Saul's height hints at a character flaw: pride. Saul often trusts his own judgment over God's, without realizing the damage it causes.

At first, though, pride isn't the problem. He's struggling with fear. Saul is so hesitant he hides during his coronation! However, when the Ammonites attack, he rallies Israel's troops and wins a decisive victory.

God has given the people what they asked for: a king to fight their battles. Still, some Israelites worry they've made a mistake. Samuel reassures them that Yahweh's blessing remains, as long as both king and people remain faithful. The choice is theirs. What will they choose?

APRIL 2026 | DAY 22

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 13
1 Samuel 14
Psalms 81

How a person behaves under pressure reveals their true character. Today's reading shows Saul's flaws in full view through two military crises.

In the first, Saul and his army are cornered, waiting for Samuel to offer a sacrifice and seek Yahweh's guidance. Samuel delays, and as the sun slips toward the horizon, panic causes Saul to take matters into his own hands. He performs the offering himself.

Samuel arrives just in time to catch the scent of the unauthorized sacrifice. When he confronts Saul, the king refuses to admit fault and instead makes excuses. He then turns to a new spiritual advisor, Eli's great-grandson, Ahijah.

The second crisis begins with Saul's own recklessness. Driven by bloodlust against the Philistines, he pulls a Jephtha-like move by making a rash oath that nearly costs his son Jonathan's life over a bite of honey. Only the intervention of the people spares Jonathan.

Ironically, Jonathan's courage and trust in Yahweh highlight the contrast with his father. He would have made a far better king. But Saul's persistent pride and failure to trust Yahweh cost both himself and Jonathan the throne. God chose Saul, but Saul did not choose God. How will things end for this short dynasty?

APRIL 2026 | DAY 23

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 15
1 Samuel 16
1 Samuel 17
Psalms 82

Saul continues to spiral, skirting God's commands and playing the blame game. God tells him to fight against the Amalekites, the nation that tried to annihilate the Israelites after the exodus. After their victory, Saul lets his soldiers plunder the Amalekites' livestock—exactly what God told him not to do!

Samuel confronts him. Saul again refuses to take responsibility for his actions. The soldiers did it! We saved them for sacrifices! They made me! Samuel will have none of it. Saul's refusal to rule as God commands leads to God regretting and rejecting Saul's kingship.

God chooses a new king. Unlike Saul, David doesn't look like much. His size and youth meant that even his father didn't think him worth calling in from the fields. God tells Samuel not to look at David's "appearance," a word that hyperlinks this passage to Genesis 3. Eve looked at the appearance of the forbidden tree and chose what looked good to her. Now, Samuel trusts Yahweh's wisdom over what he sees. He anoints David king over Israel.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 23 - CONTINUED

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 15
1 Samuel 16
1 Samuel 17
Psalms 82

There's more to this shepherd boy than meets the eye. When a towering Philistine picks a fight with Israel, only David answers the challenge. As Hannah prophesied, the weapons of the proud and powerful are useless in this fight. David steps into the ring armed with a staff, a sling, and some river rocks. His unshakeable confidence in Yahweh drives the narrative. David takes Goliath down with a stone, leaving the Philistines' champion in the same condition as their god Dagon—sprawled in the dirt, head rolling from his body.

God chooses a leader nobody expects, who overthrows a wicked superpower no one else can defeat. It's a promising start for Israel's new king and a pattern we will see again in Scripture.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 24

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 18
1 Samuel 19
1 Samuel 20
Psalms 83

How does Saul's son Jonathan feel about David being chosen to replace him as king? In a surprising departure from the pattern of hostile rivalry throughout the biblical story, Jonathan does not resent David. In fact, he loves him!

The Hebrew word ahavah means more than just a feeling. See in the video how ahavah encompasses humble and generous action, extending goodness and blessing on behalf of others.

Jonathan's love for David is a case in point. He steps aside to let this insignificant shepherd boy claim the throne, handing over his royal robe and weaponry to David. When Saul's approval of David sours into malice, Jonathan puts himself in the way of his father's murderous rage to protect his friend.

Meanwhile, Saul shows what happens when envy drives out love. He tries to skewer David with his spear. David dodges, so Saul sends him to battle, hoping the Philistines will do his dirty work for him. With Yahweh protecting David, Saul's increasingly crazy assassination attempts all fail. Saul sends David on what he's sure will be a death mission. David survives and kills twice his quota of enemies. Saul sends a team of soldiers to seize David at home. Michal (Saul's daughter) throws them off the trail with a fake David, an idol statue wearing a goat wig. When Saul chases David to the city of Naioth, Saul is swept into a prophetic frenzy that leaves him passed out, naked, on the ground. Every attempt to wield violent control leaves Saul humiliated and lost.

APRIL 2026 | DAY 24 - CONTINUED

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 18
1 Samuel 19
1 Samuel 20
Psalms 83

Saul's vicious jealousy fractures his family and forces the mournful parting between Jonathan and David. If David is Yahweh's anointed, protected king, why is he now running for his life?

APRIL 2026 | DAY 25

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 21
1 Samuel 22
1 Samuel 23
1 Samuel 24
Psalms 84

God promised to make David king. At first, ascension to the throne looks inevitable. Once an insignificant shepherd boy, David rockets up the ranks from court musician to military general and national hero. But now, Israel's former general is running for his life, sleeping in caves with only a ragtag militia of poor farmers for allies.

David has every reason to think Yahweh abandoned him. Instead of giving up on God's promise or trying to take the throne on his own terms, David humbly trusts in God's timing. When Saul lashes out, David doesn't strike back. David sends troops on a rescue mission against the Philistines instead of a revenge mission against Saul, biding his time while Yahweh works behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, Saul's desperate attempts to hold onto the throne drive increasing violence and instability. He's losing it. He orders the slaughter of an entire family of priests because they helped David escape, even though the priests thought they were carrying out Saul's orders!

David gets a perfect chance to kill Saul. Saul is distracted and unsuspecting. David is within stabbing distance, but he cuts a chunk of fabric instead of taking Saul's life. David's mercy moves Saul to tears and a temporary truce, but lasting reconciliation never happens. The two men depart from one another. What will happen when their paths cross again?