BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 7:3-17
PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17

A Virtuous Leader



NIA STOOD NEAR THE OLD BASKETBALL COURT WHERE SHE AND HER FRIENDS USED TO HANG OUT EVERY DAY. Their laughter once made her feel included. Now, whenever they laughed, it felt like the laughing was about her. She tried to figure out when everything had changed. Maybe it started when she refused to join in on cruel jokes. Or maybe it was when she stood up for a quiet classmate whom everyone ignored. Whatever the reason, she suddenly felt like an outsider.

Nia thought that being a leader would mean popularity and respect. Instead, it felt like walking alone in the middle of a storm. Some classmates whispered that she was "acting like she was better than everyone else." Even a few friends said that she had changed. But Nia knew the truth: She had chosen to treat everyone with kindness and respect, regardless of their abilities, background, or culture.



One day, the school asked for a volunteer to organize the winter charity drive. The room went silent. Nia felt her heart pound. She could stay quiet and avoid more attention. Fear told her to look down. But something stronger pushed her to act. "I'll do it," she said, her voice shaking.

Some students smirked. Others rolled their eyes. Still, Nia got to work. She made calls to local businesses, organized volunteers, and encouraged the few classmates who believed in the project. Slowly, boxes of coats and food filled the gym. When families came to receive the donations, they left smiling and expressing their gratitude. Watching that moment, Nia realized something important: leadership isn't about being liked; it's about doing what's right.

WORD UP

1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17

3 So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." **4** So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only. **5** Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the Lord for you." **6** When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the Lord." Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah. **7** When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. **8** They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." **9** Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. He cried out to the Lord on Israel's behalf, and the Lord answered him. **10** While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. **11** The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

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15 Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. **16** From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. **17** But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the Lord.

KEY VERSE:

Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. (1 Samuel 7:15)



WORK OUT

IN THIS PASSAGE, THE ISRAELITES KNEW THEY NEEDED GOD'S HELP. After turning back to Him, they asked Samuel to pray for them. Samuel understood that prayer was not just important—it was necessary. Later, in 1 Samuel 12:23, he even said that he would never stop praying for the people. That shows just how seriously he took leadership.

Samuel was a prophet, priest, and judge. But what made him a strong leader was not his title . . . it was his obedience to God. He listened to God and led the people to trust Him. When the Philistines attacked again, God stepped in with supernatural power. The Israelites were outmatched, but God confused their enemies and gave His people victory. This wasn't because Israel was strong; it was because God was faithful.

After the victory, Samuel set up a large stone and named it *Ebenezer*, which means "stone of help." It was a reminder that God had helped them. It marked a turning point, serving as a reminder that when they trusted God, He delivered them.



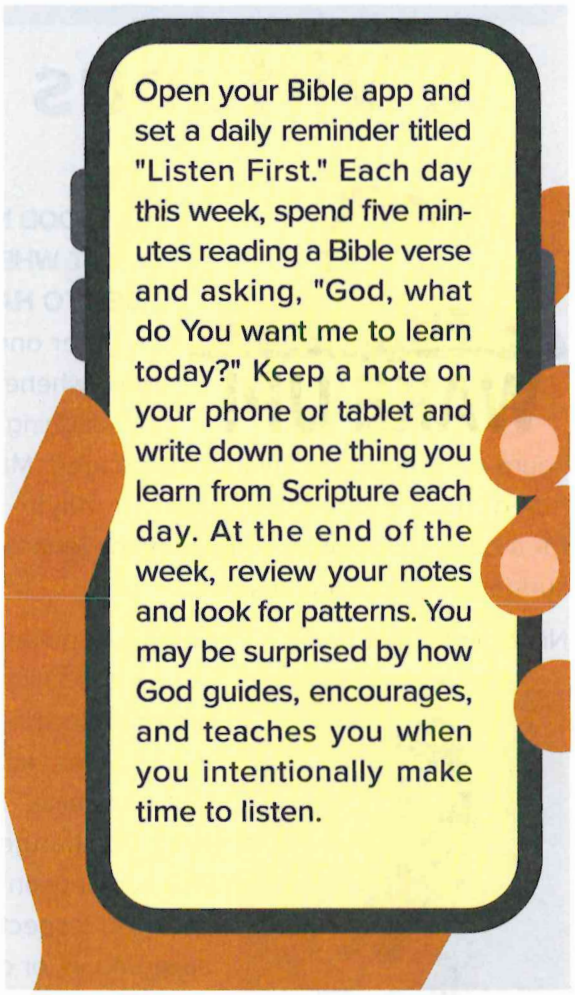
This victory ended forty years of Philistine oppression. The lesson is clear: godly leaders depend on prayer, obedience, and trust in God, not their own strength.

INSIDE OUT

Samuel became a great leader by listening to God and obeying Him. In considering your own life, respond to the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What voices compete for your attention each day?
2. How can you make time to listen to God in prayer and Scripture?
3. When has God guided you through a difficult decision?
4. God still speaks today through His Word, prayer, and wise Christian mentors. What is one step you can take this week to become a better listener?

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!



Open your Bible app and set a daily reminder titled "Listen First." Each day this week, spend five minutes reading a Bible verse and asking, "God, what do You want me to learn today?" Keep a note on your phone or tablet and write down one thing you learn from Scripture each day. At the end of the week, review your notes and look for patterns. You may be surprised by how God guides, encourages, and teaches you when you intentionally make time to listen.





Samuel became a strong leader because he listened to God and obeyed Him. This week, make time to hear God's voice through prayer and Scripture. When you face a decision, ask, "What would God want me to do?" God still guides His people when they are willing to listen and obey.



STEPPING OUT!

Ask God to help you grow as a leader at school, at church, at home, or in your neighborhood. Think of someone you admire as a leader. Ask if you can talk with that person about his or her journey. Prepare a few questions about challenges that the person has faced and lessons that he or she has learned. Take notes. Learning from others is one of the best ways that you can grow into the leader that God is shaping you to be.

Media Mission

Search for a short Bible reading plan about leadership or courage on your Bible app. Set a daily reminder to pray for boldness and wisdom. Ask God to help you lead *His* way, even when you feel nervous or afraid. He is a miracle worker and wants to perform miracles in your life. Trust Him! Trust His Word. How can you increase your Bible reading and study time? How often do you pray? Visit the link below to hear a song about miracles.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4WolHtAanU&list=RDg4WolHtAanU&start_radio=1

IT'S GAME TIME!

When you are given responsibility, how do you respond? Do you avoid it when it feels hard? Do you pray and ask God for help? Leadership stretches you. It can feel uncomfortable, but growth often happens in uncomfortable moments.

This week, talk with a trusted adult, parent, or friend and ask them the following questions:

1. **How do I respond when I'm frustrated?**
2. **What are my strengths?**
3. **Where could I grow as a leader?**

Be ready to listen honestly. God often uses others to help shape you into the leader that He wants you to become.

