

# THE UNITED HEBREW NATION

## CHARACTER STUDIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

DISCUSSION LEADERS: TROXEL BALLOU AND PHILIP DEGARMO

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Bible is that the Holy Spirit pulls no punches in recording history. Case in point: the royal house of Israel. That family had murder, lying, adultery, deceit, cowardice, pride, intrigue – a textbook example of a dysfunctional family, making an intriguing study for us today.



This course will cover the history of Israel over the couple of centuries from the birth of Samuel to the death of Solomon. We will read through the narrative outside of class, then discuss particular points of the history with each other. Although we will consider the national history, we will give particular emphasis to the lives of the main individuals in the story and their personal interactions. We will focus on Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon, but will also give some consideration to others, such as Hannah, Eli and his sons, Jonathan, Abner, Joab, Abigail, and Absalom. We will consider their weaknesses and strong points, and use the study as a warning and a learning opportunity for us, consistent with the teaching of Scripture that *“these things were written as an example for you”*. This Bible class is designed to be transformative, which is to say, we intend these studies to help you *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* by studying the history of these characters and applying what you learn. We want you to come out of this class a different person than you are now.

### OBJECTIVES

At the end of this class, you should be able to:

- lay out this period in Hebrew history in chronological order, naming the main players and the main events
- explain (with examples) how this story serves as a warning for me today
- explain how God has acted and interacted with His people in history
- give some insight into the characters of the main players and into my own character
- explain (with examples) how evil behaviors have consequences that extend through family histories and how that applies to me and my family

### METHODOLOGY

There are readings from the Bible for almost every class period, amounting to just about one chapter per day. Please read and contemplate the scripture prior to class. As often as possible, we will have available some questions to focus our limited time together for maximum benefit to you. You should expect to commit about 20-30 minutes plus your reading time in preparation for each class period.

*Please do not sign up for this class if you are unwilling to do this.*

From time to time, there may be opportunities for you to do outside research to share with the class. These will be voluntary, but we hope you will be willing to stretch yourself to do the extra learning. You will also have an opportunity to share your learnings from the class in the form of a written paper at the end of the quarter.

Please come to class *on time and prepared*. Certainly there are mitigating circumstances, but please commit to being punctual as frequently as possible. Habitual tardiness without good reason shows a lack of respect for the other class members and for God Himself, not to mention reflecting poorly on you yourself.