

# STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

## Strengthening Your Grip on Authority

1 Samuel 15



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

*Authority.* That's a bad word to many people. *Question authority* seems to be the motto of our culture, and rebellion seems to be a rite of passage.

How many teachers spend the majority of their class time just trying to get students under control? How many police officers realize that, to many, their badge is no longer an emblem of honor and respect but a target to shoot at? How many bosses get the feeling that their employees would do anything rather than what they're supposed to do? And how many parents know the frustration of having their authority undermined, not just by defiant children but by their peers, the media, and the culture at large?

Let's remember that God has set the authorities in place. Rebellion against earthly authorities amounts to rebellion against God, which is the most serious revolt of all.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. The Roots of Rebellion

All rebellion has its roots in our ancient parents, Adam and Eve. When they disobeyed God, the weeds of defiance invaded the garden of Eden and the entire human race (Romans 5:12). The weeds poked their prickly leaves out of the ground in the life of Cain, Adam and Eve's son who killed his brother in a fit of jealousy (Genesis 4:3–8). Rebellion, however, doesn't always reveal itself in such a drastic way as Cain's murder of Abel. Sometimes it's more subtle, silently convincing our hearts that the time has come to free ourselves from the "tyranny" of our heavenly Ruler—to live life our way instead of God's.



## Quotable

*“That which  
will keep a  
ministry on target  
is a faithful  
commitment to  
the Word  
of God.”*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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#### 2. How Rebellion Reveals Itself (1 Samuel 15:1–35)

King Saul bears the infamous reputation of one who spurned the very God who had appointed him king of Israel. Where David was known as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), Saul could rightly be labeled as a man after *Saul's* own heart. Saul's track record shows four primary ways that rebellion reveals itself.

1. **Defying authority to fulfill our desires:** God told Saul to kill all the Amalekites and their animals, but Saul spared King Agag and the best livestock. Rebellion is letting our own desires nudge ahead of the desire to obey God fully (1 Samuel 15:1–9).
2. **Rationalization and cover-up to excuse sinful actions:** Though Saul disobeyed God's command, the king had convinced himself that he had actually obeyed God's command. And when Christians disobey, it is still sin (15:10–13).
3. **Defensiveness when confronted with the truth:** Like a child caught sneaking cookies before dinner, Saul's rebellion was uncovered by Samuel. But instead of owning up to his sin, King Saul was defensive and pinned the blame on others (15:14–15).
4. **Resistance to accountability when wrong has been committed:** Worse than blatantly ignoring God's command, Saul reinterpreted his sin. He refused to be held accountable to anyone but himself and his own agenda (15:16–23).

Finally, under the pressure of Samuel's confrontation, Saul admitted his sin. But it was too little too late. From that point on, God rejected Saul as Israel's king (15:24–35). For Christians, God forgives rebellion, but we can't erase the consequences for our relationships and our ministry.



#### A CLOSER LOOK

##### *Disqualified by Rebellion*

King Saul was a real piece of work. After he became king of Israel, his actions and decisions soon revealed to the people that he wasn't the man they thought he was. He was, instead, a selfish, angry, hateful, mean-spirited man. During the later years of his rule he lost touch with reality, thus disqualifying himself for the job. Early in Saul's regime, when God commanded him to kill all the Amalekites, Saul openly disobeyed God. When Samuel pointed his finger at the king, Saul at first tried to rationalize what he had done, then finally admitted, "I am guilty." But even then, Saul qualified his confession, "because I feared the people and listened to their voice" (1 Samuel 15:24). The tragic story of Saul is that he never, ever fully repented of his sin. Though believers in Christ have received complete forgiveness, unguarded and vulnerable confession to God and others preserves our relationships with the Lord and the people we love.



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### LET'S LIVE IT

So how can we avoid rebellion against God's authority? Here are some suggestions for all three stages of life, beginning with children in the home.

- **Children:** *A rebellious nature is conceived in a home where parents relinquish control.* Actually, children don't want complete control; they want limits from loving parents.
- **Teens:** *A rebellious spirit is cultivated among peers who resist control.* Peer pressure exerts a powerful influence. Parents must keep open lines of communication with teens.
- **Adults:** *A rebellious life is crushed by God when He regains control.* We can't resist God's authority forever. Eventually, He will allow our circumstances to teach us the importance of submission. God sometimes has to rock the boat to get us back on course.

Are you in rebellion against any of the authorities God has placed in your life? What will you do to make things right?



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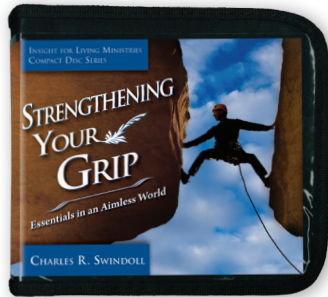
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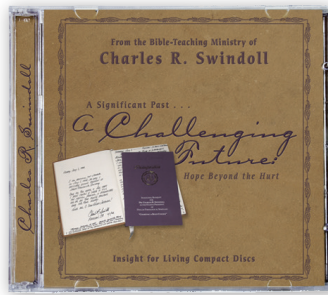
1 Samuel 15



## Tools for Digging Deeper



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Your Grip**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
compact disc set



**A Significant Past . . .  
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Color Print**  
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