

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 8

In those days there
was was no king in
in Israel;
everyone did as
as they saw fit.

Introduction

As we come to the book of 1 Samuel, we enter a dark and turbulent time in the history of Israel. This period follows—and in many ways overlaps with—the time of the Judges. Eli and Samuel serve as the final two judges of the nation, and in these chapters, we witness the transition to the first two kings of Israel.

In the first chapter, we meet a woman in a desperate and hopeless situation, whose personal struggle mirrors the state of the nation. The final chapters of Judges describe a country in moral decay, where idolatry and disobedience reign. Despite being led out of Egypt, guided through the desert, and saved repeatedly by God's hand, the people have turned their backs on Him.

My prayer as we work through 1 Samuel together is that you will see the greatness of the God we serve. I pray that you have time to savour who He is, and to observe the way He works and acts on behalf of His people. Above all, I pray that as we examine the rise of Israel's early kings, your gaze will be fixed upon the King of all history and the King of eternity: Jesus Christ.

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Study 1: 1 Samuel 1:1–2:11

1. What were the struggles in Hannah's life, and what was the deepest longing of her heart?
2. Read the last verse of Judges 21:25. This sets the context for 1 Samuel. How does Hannah's situation reflect Israel's situation also? How might 1:3-6 be making this worse?
3. Looking at other barren women in the Bible (e.g., Gen. 11:30, 25:20-21, Luke 1:5-25), what does this teach us about the way God works?
4. Where does Hannah turn in her desperation, and what does this reveal about her faith?
5. In her prayer in v11, what does Hannah request, and what does she entrust to God?
6. What is the significance of the name "Samuel"?
7. How does Hannah's prayer change your understanding of God's character?
8. When are we tempted to replace dependence on God with "human gimmicks"?
9. How does our view of God shape our prayer life and our relationship with Him?

Study 2: 1 Samuel 2:12–3:21

1. What was the central problem with Eli's sons, and why is this so dangerous for the nation?
2. Despite the corruption of the priesthood, where can we see God's hand at work in these chapters?
3. What is the significance of the contrasts found in these verses (e.g., 2:19 vs 22, 2:21b vs 2:26)?
4. What does the judgment on Eli's house teach us about the importance of God's Word?
5. What is the "good news" found in 2:35 and 3:1 regarding the future of Israel?
6. In a world where God's voice can feel silent, how do we ensure we remain attentive to His Word?
7. Spiritual starvation is often a lack of appetite for the Word. How can we guard against losing that hunger?
8. What is the danger for a church that loses its appetite for the Truth?

Study 3: 1 Samuel 4:1–22

1. Why does the narrative shift away from Samuel for a time? What is God trying to teach Israel?
2. In 4:1–5, how is Israel trying to "force God's hand," and how do we do the same today?
3. What is the difference between Israel's plans and God's sovereign purposes in this battle?
4. How does the loss of the Ark affect the way the people view God?
5. Was the glory of God lost because the Ark was captured, or was the Ark captured because the glory had already departed?
6. What is the warning here for us as individuals and as a church?
7. How does the capture of the Ark help distinguish between *knowing* God and being *familiar* with religious objects?
8. How can we ensure that the "glory of the Lord" remains the focus of our community?

Study 4: 1 Samuel 5:1–7:1

1. In what ways does God show in 5:1–5 that He cannot be defeated by human or worldly forces?
2. How do we reconcile the reality that God is self-sufficient, yet chooses to use us in His service?
3. What do the plagues in 5:6–12 teach us about who actually rules the world?
4. Why did the men die in 6:19? What does this teach us about our approach to God?
5. How can we avoid being "lazy" or irreverent in our worship?
6. What are some common, casual terms we use for God that might reveal a lack of true reverence?
7. How do these chapters challenge our understanding of God's judgment and grace working together?
8. In what ways might we be tempted to think God "needs" us to act in a certain way to save His reputation?

Study 5: 1 Samuel 7:2–17

1. If repentance requires action, can the same be said of faith? What is the difference between genuine and superficial repentance?
2. Compare Israel's attitude in 7:7–8 with their behaviour in 4:3–7. What changed?
3. How might we be guilty of living by our own "cleverness" rather than trusting God?
4. What personal "helps" or securities do we rely on that distract us from sole trust in God?
5. Why is the act of "remembering" (v12) so vital to our spiritual health?
6. What are the "Ebenezer stones" (reminders of God's help) in your own life?
7. Why is it important to constantly remind ourselves of the way God has acted in the past?
8. How does looking back at God's faithfulness help us endure our current difficulties?

Study 6: 1 Samuel 8:1–22

1. What was the true heart of the elders' request for a king? Why was it wrong?
2. What warnings were given about this king in 10–18? Why did the people ignore them?
3. What are the things in our modern world that we allow to "rule over us" instead of God?
4. Why is the Bible's warning about these worldly idols so often ignored by us?
5. Can you think of a time God said "no" to your prayer, and you later realised it was a gracious act?
6. When are you most tempted to prioritise being "like everyone else" rather than being obedient to God?
7. How does the nation's refusal to heed God's wisdom mirror our world today?
8. In what ways do you personally struggle with wanting to conform to the world?

Study 7: 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16

1. Read 9:3–14. Do you see God's hand in the ordinary, or do you view life as a series of coincidences? Can you think of a time when a small, seemingly frustrating event actually led you somewhere significant?
2. How does 9:15–27 shift your perspective on how God works in the background of your own life? What might God be "setting up" for you right now that you aren't yet aware of?
3. What specific signs were given to Saul that confirmed he was chosen by God, and what do these tell us about how God confirms His calling?
4. Why is it considered "irreverent" to demand God reveal His full plan to us? What should we do instead?
5. How does reading God's Word help you see deeper into your current circumstances, and can you think of a time when Scripture gave you a perspective you wouldn't have had on your own?
6. Does your prayer life reflect a genuine desire to see God's hand in the mundane? What is one "ordinary" thing you can start bringing to God in prayer today that you might have previously overlooked?
7. Looking back at the study so far, how have you been encouraged by the way God uses various people and situations to accomplish His purposes?
8. How can we better cultivate the habit of looking for God's hand in our "ordinary days," rather than just reacting to the busyness of life?

Study 8: 1 Samuel 11:1–12:25

1. What hopes or fears are you bringing into your walk with God at this time?
2. In the face of Nahash's arrogance, where did Israel find her strength?
3. Despite Israel's desire for a king, where did the victory really come from (11:6–8)?
4. How does John 15:5–6 relate to the events in 1 Samuel 11?
5. How can we avoid "patting ourselves on the back" when God provides a victory?
6. When are you most tempted to rely on human wisdom or guidance rather than God's?
7. How has your view of God's sovereignty over both the big and small moments of life changed through this study?
8. What is one specific truth about God's character that you want to carry with you into the next week?

Study 9: 1 Samuel 13-14

1. What exactly was Saul's foolishness in this situation, and what excuse did he give for acting that way?
2. How does Saul's behavior confirm that he is not the king who will truly rescue God's people? In what ways does his approach resemble the kings of the other nations around Israel?
3. The Bible often defines a "fool" not as someone lacking intelligence, but as someone who lives as though God does not exist or does not matter. How does this definition change your understanding of Saul's "foolishness"?
4. Can you think of a time when "common sense" or practical pressure stood in direct opposition to obeying God?
5. How do Jonathan's actions—his faith and risk-taking—help you appreciate and be thrilled by what Jesus has done for you?
6. How does Jonathan's example prompt you to be brave for God? What is something you feel called to do that might require that same kind of courage?
7. Saul's excuse for disobedience is a classic human reaction. Can you identify an "excuse" you have used in your own life that mirrors Saul's?
8. Looking at 13:17–22, how do these details illustrate just how much trouble Israel was actually in?
9. In 14:1–16, how do Jonathan's actions stand in stark contrast to Saul's actions in the previous chapter? What was the result of Jonathan's choice compared to the result of Saul's?

Study 10: 1 Samuel 15

1. We have seen the problem that arises when we decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. We often try to play God, but we are nowhere near qualified for the position. How does this tension show up in your own life?
2. Looking at 15:1 and 15:17, explain how Saul ended up as King. What (if anything) did he have to do with his own appointment, and how have you seen Saul change since he first took the throne?
3. According to 15:22–23, what is it that pleases the Lord most? How do repentance and obedience work together in the life of a believer?
4. Before we come to God, what usually "rules" our thoughts and our lives? Once we are following Him, what should be ruling them instead?
5. In 15:11, we read that God "regrets" making Saul king. Has God actually changed, or has Saul changed? What does this tell us about God's relationship with human leadership?
6. Based on what we see in this chapter, what does true repentance look like, and how does that differ from just saying "I'm sorry"?
7. What excuses does Saul make for his disobedience, and how do those mirror the excuses we are tempted to offer when we know we've missed the mark?
8. Why is it both a comfort and a challenge that God does not change? How does His unchanging nature affect the way you approach Him when you have failed?