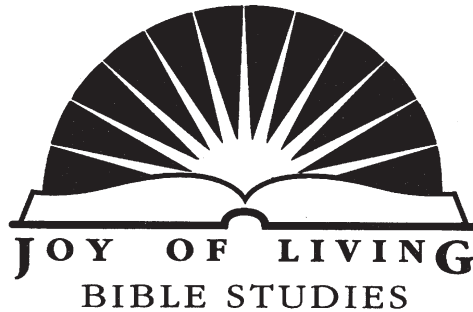


1 Samuel

Lesson 1



God's Call, God's Promise (Genesis 11-35)

Although the events in the book of 1 Samuel took place between 1105 and 1010 BC,¹ the story began with one man nearly a thousand years earlier in the city of Ur of the Chaldees (in modern day Iraq). The descendants of Noah had spread out, multiplied and populated the earth, and they had again abandoned the God who created them.

Yet God had not abandoned man. He called one man, Abram, and told him that if he would leave his country and go to a land God would show him, He would make of Abram a great nation, give him that land, and bless all the world through him. (It would be through his descendants that the Savior of the world would come.) In faith Abram (later called Abraham) obeyed God. Abraham had a son, Isaac, to whom the promise was given, and he in turn had a son, Jacob, to whom the promise was given.

From a Family to a Nation (Genesis 46—Exodus 18)

Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel, had 12 sons. When Jacob was an old man he, his sons and their families (70 people in all) went into Egypt to escape starvation during a great famine. One of the sons, Joseph, was already there and in great power. He was second only to the Pharaoh, and because of this the family was well cared for.

However, generations passed, and the children of Israel grew in numbers. A new Pharaoh arose and was fearful of this great number of foreigners living within the borders of his land. To protect himself and his country, he placed the Israelites in bondage, where they remained for nearly 400 years. As always, God was faithful, and in His time He raised up a man named Moses. With great and mighty miracles God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians and led them to the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

A Covenant Made — A Covenant Broken (Exodus 19 — Judges)

Prior to bringing them into the Promised Land, the general area of Israel today, God made a covenant with the Israelites. At Mount Sinai

they agreed to serve the Lord and obey His commands. He gave them His Law, and promised to bless them as long as they served Him. But even as God gave them His glorious Law they were rebelling against Him and worshipping other gods. And so began the cycle of God's blessing, Israel's rebellion, God's disciplining, their repentance, God's deliverance and blessing again.

Because of their continued disobedience and rebellion, the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years after leaving Egypt and prior to entering the Promised Land. God, however, miraculously provided for them during that time. Finally, with Israel poised on the verge of entering the Promised Land, God designated Joshua, son of Nun, to lead them in the conquest of their new homeland. The final chapter of the book of Joshua states, "Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel" (Joshua 24:31).

The time of the judges began soon after the death of Joshua. Israel would again rebel against God and worship false gods. God would allow a nation to oppress them until they cried out to God in their misery. In mercy He would raise up a person to judge them and lead them in victory against their oppressor. As long as the judge lived there was peace, but when the judge died the Israelites soon slipped into their old ways. This was a time when "everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 17:6)—and much of the time, anarchy reigned.

God's Plan

The Bible unfolds for us God's beautiful plan to redeem mankind and restore to us everything that was lost in the Garden of Eden. The conquest of Canaan and the consequent removal of the ungodly and wicked people living there were part of God's plan. His plan for Israel (see Romans 9:4-5) was...

- ☞ to establish a "holy nation" (Exodus 19:6).
- ☞ to give them His law and the temple worship.
- ☞ to reveal to them His glory.
- ☞ to bring forth through them the Messiah, the Savior, to redeem the world.

It was not that the Israelites were innately better than other nations. As the Bible plainly reveals, all mankind is lost in sin (see Romans 3:23) and Israel repeatedly sinned. It is simply that God chooses

1. Kenneth Barker, editor. *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985). See "Introduction: 1 Samuel."

to use whomever He will, and He chose to create and use the nation of Israel as part of His plan. Through them He would demonstrate to the world...

- ☞ that He alone is God.
- ☞ that He is completely holy.
- ☞ that all mankind is depraved.
- ☞ that sin is terrible.
- ☞ that we are helpless in our sin.
- ☞ that it is impossible to remove sin and its consequences by any natural means.
- ☞ that a Savior is necessary (see Galatians 3).

And then, through them He would send His Son to be our Savior.

1 and 2 Samuel

First and Second Samuel were originally one book. The translators of the Septuagint, a pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament, divided it into two books. The book of 1 Samuel begins during the time of the judges and ushers in the five hundred year period of the kings of Israel (approximately 1050-586 BC).¹ The events recorded in 1 Samuel cover a period of about 115 years, beginning with the childhood of Samuel the prophet, through the difficult times of Saul, Israel's first king, and ending during the early part of the reign of David, God's chosen king. Second Samuel, which will be covered in a separate Joy of Living study, is focused on the story of David as king. It ends prior to his death.

Who Wrote 1 and 2 Samuel?

There are varying opinions regarding what person or persons physically wrote 1 and 2 Samuel. Was it Samuel? Did Samuel write part of it, and then someone else finished it? Was it a scribe who gathered information from various sources and compiled it? There are entire books written about who and when various portions of the Bible were written, and it is all very interesting and serves a purpose; however, our purpose in this study is to know God better, to understand His working on behalf of mankind and through mankind.

And to that end, God solves for us the problem of "Who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel?" He tells us simply that the Bible (including 1 and 2 Samuel) is His Word, recorded by man but written by the Holy Spirit. Second Peter 1:21 says, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." And 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed..." Regardless of whom God used to record it, He has spoken to us. The test of time has proven the infallibility of His Word.

Second Peter 1:19 says, "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place..." As you work through the study of 1

1. Henrietta C. Mears. *What the Bible Is All About* (Ventura: Regal, 1997) 111.

Samuel, ask God to open the eyes of your understanding to His truth. Ask Him to help apply His truth to your own life.

A Daily Appointment with God

Make a daily appointment with God. Find a quiet spot. Take your Bible, pencil or pen and your study material with you. If you have a busy phone, you may have to turn it off! Remember how very important your appointment with God is and *make time to be with Him daily*. Ask yourself the following things:

1. How much time will I spend with the Lord each day?
2. What do I need to put aside in order to spend this time with the Lord? (Examples: sleep, TV, emailing, web-browsing or online chatting, casual telephone conversations, etc. Each person will have to decide what his or her priorities are, and what can be removed from the daily schedule to make time to spend with God.)
3. What is the *best time* for my appointment with God?
4. Where is the *quietest* place for me to pray and study?
5. Do I really want to spend time with God? (If your last answer is "yes," God will bless you as you work out the time. If your last answer is "no," pray that God will give you a desire, a hunger to spend this time with Him. He will do this for you!)

Study Questions

Before you begin your study this week:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the commentary on the Introduction to 1 Samuel.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the introduction to 1 Samuel or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down, carry it with you, tack it to your bulletin board, on the dashboard of your car, etc. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10, concentrating on 1:1-2.

1. Who is introduced in 1 Samuel 1:1?

2. What do you learn about this man's family in 1 Samuel 1:2?

3. a. Challenge: The story of Samuel does not address polygamy; it merely acknowledges that it exists—it treats it as a fact of life. Although polygamy was not explicitly condemned in the Old Testament Scriptures, it was not God's intention for mankind. What do you learn about God's plan for marriage in the following verses? Note whether words describing the marriage partners are singular or plural, and how many people are meant to be included in a marriage.

Matthew 19:4-6 (Jesus is quoting Genesis 2:24 and 5:2)

1 Corinthians 7:2

- b. Challenge: What do the following passages teach about marriage for those in leadership in the church, who are to be the examples for other followers of Christ?

1 Timothy 3:2 (“overseer” refers to one who holds a position of leadership in the church)

Titus 1:6

4. a. One of Elkanah's wives, Hannah, had no children. From the following verses, how did the Hebrews view having many children?

Psalms 127:3-5

Psalm 128

- b. From the following verses, how desperate were some of the Hebrew women to have children?

Genesis 16:1-2

Genesis 29:31—30:3 (summarize briefly)

5. According to Genesis 16:1-2 and Ruth 4:11-12, who is ultimately responsible for whether a woman bears a child?
6. Personal: Imagine how Hannah felt about her childless condition, given the expectations of her culture. This was only compounded by the fact that her husband's other wife, Peninnah, had children. What disappointment or failure have you suffered? Was the situation made more difficult by the expectations of your family and friends?

Third Day: Review 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10, concentrating on 1:3-8.

1. How faithful was Elkanah in worshipping the Lord? (1 Samuel 1:3)
2. Challenge: The tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant had been located in Shiloh since the time Israel had conquered the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership (see Joshua 18:1). What did God command Israel in Exodus 34:18,22-23?
3. a. What did Elkanah do after he presented his sacrifice to the Lord? (1 Samuel 1:4-5)
- b. Challenge: Some of the sacrificial offerings were entirely burned before the Lord, and some were given to the priests and Levites for their sustenance. Family members also shared in certain of the sacrificial offerings brought to the Lord. What do you learn about this in Deuteronomy 12:17-18?
4. What provocation did Hannah suffer every year when the family went up to worship the Lord? (1 Samuel 1:6-7)
5. How did Elkanah try to comfort Hannah? (1 Samuel 1:8)

6. Personal: First Samuel 1:6 specifically tells us, “The LORD had closed [Hannah’s] womb.” God is all-powerful, and He is in control of all our circumstances. Just like Hannah, you may be grieving over something in your life that you cannot change. Have you acknowledged God’s power and also His love for you? Do you trust that He will work in your circumstances for your good? Write down Romans 8:28, inserting your name if you would like to.

Fourth Day: Review 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10, concentrating on 1:9-18.

1. What did Hannah finally do when her misery reached its peak? (1 Samuel 1:9-10)
2. What vow did she make to the Lord? (1 Samuel 1:11)
3. How did Eli the priest misjudge Hannah’s actions? (1 Samuel 1:12-14)
4. a. How did Hannah explain her actions to Eli? (1 Samuel 1:15-16)
 - b. How did Eli respond? (1 Samuel 1:17)
5. How did Hannah’s time of prayer change her attitude and outlook? (1 Samuel 1:18)
6. Personal: Hannah prayed in faith, believing that God would hear and answer her prayer. Though she didn’t receive an immediate answer to her prayer, she regained her appetite and was “no longer downcast.” When dealing with your own difficulties, are you able to pray in faith and then trust God for the outcome? If you have trouble trusting Him, ask Him to help you overcome your unbelief. (See Mark 9:24.)

Fifth Day: Review 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10, concentrating on 1:19-28.

1. What does 1 Samuel 1:19 say that God did?
2. To whom did Hannah give the credit for her son’s conception and birth? (1 Samuel 1:20)
3. Why did Hannah not go with the family to offer the annual sacrifice? (1 Samuel 1:21-23)¹
4. What did Hannah do after her son was weaned? (1 Samuel 1:24-28a)

¹ “In the ancient world a child was breast-fed for two or three years before it was considered old enough to spend extended periods of time away from home.” Frank E. Gaebelein, editor. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

5. What was Eli's response to Hannah's announcement? (1 Samuel 1:28b)¹

6. Personal: First Samuel 1:19 says, "the LORD remembered [Hannah]." God does not forget; His remembrance "is not a matter of recalling to mind, but of paying special attention to or lavishing special care on" someone.² Read Psalm 8:3-4. The Hebrew verb translated "mindful of" in verse 4 is the same word translated "remembered" in 1 Samuel 1:19. Are you amazed that God, who created everything, is "mindful of" you? Do you believe that when you pray, He will "remember" you in your difficult situation?

Sixth Day: Review 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10, concentrating on 2:1-10.

1. a. Whom does Hannah praise after she brought her son Samuel to Shiloh? (1 Samuel 2:1)
 - b. What attributes of God does she celebrate in 1 Samuel 2:2?

2. How does Hannah warn those who are arrogant? (1 Samuel 2:3)

3. a. From 1 Samuel 2:4-5, will human strength and accomplishment stand forever?
 - b. Who is sovereign over all the affairs of mankind? (1 Samuel 2:6-8)

4. From 1 Samuel 2:9a, what assurance does Hannah have about God's care for His "saints"?³

5. a. Who will ultimately prevail, and why? (1 Samuel 2:9b-10)
 - b. Challenge: 1 Samuel 2:9b-10 gives a hint of the anointed king that God would someday raise up to rule and to judge all mankind. What do you learn about this from Matthew 25:31-46? Summarize briefly.

6. Personal: Who do you think is in control of your life and circumstances? Do you depend upon your own strength and accomplishments for your security? Do Hannah's words in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 give you a different view of reality? In what way?

1. Some commentators say that in this passage "he" refers to Samuel or to Elkanah; others say that the pronoun should be translated "they," thus including all of those who were present.

2. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. See note on 1 Samuel 1:11.

3. The Hebrew word translated "saint" in 1 Samuel 2:9 means "one to whom the Lord has pledged his covenant love" (Ibid).