

LEARNING FROM  
**GIANTS**  
SAMUEL AND DAVID

Learning from Giants - Session 1  
Samuel – January 23, 2020

1. Look at the last line of the book of Judges – Judges 21:25. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel comes immediately after Judges. What does that tell you about the book of Samuel?

*25 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (Jdg 21:25 NIV). The implication of Judges is 'if only there was a king to help us to follow God, life would be good.' In the Hebrew Bible, you go right from Judges to Samuel, implying that Samuel will explain how Israel got her kings.*

2. Read 1 Samuel 1. Compare verse 11 to Judges 13:4-5. In what ways will Samuel's life mirror Samson's? In what ways are they different? Notice how God can work through faithful people and unfaithful ones too.

*Both Samson and Samuel are born to barren mothers. They are both set apart from birth and dedicated to the LORD. Samuel though takes his calling seriously, when Samson is only in it for his own pleasure. Samuel becomes a giant of Israelite faith; Samson dies devastating his enemies.*

3. When Hannah is first at Shiloh, she is pouring her heart out to God, practicing real vibrant faith. Eli sees her praying and assumes she's drunk. What does this tell you about the potential of real 'layman's' spirituality and the potential hazards of 'priestly' spirituality?

*Some people assume that there are two classes of spirituality – 'the priests' and 'everybody else.' The clergy have these great relationships with God and everybody else has to pick up the scraps. Not true. EVERYONE, regardless of their training or status, can and should have a vibrant faith.*

4. Read Hannah's prayer in chapter 2:1-10. Note the amount of words given to exalting God, relative to the words given regarding the future king. Given that this book is all about 'Israel getting a king,' what does Hannah's prayer prophetically tell us about the relative importance of God to the king? How can we apply that principle in our lives?

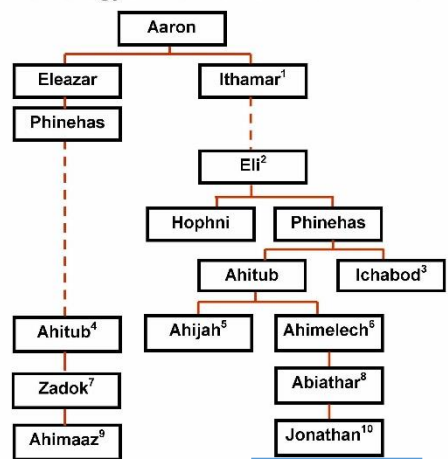
*Hannah's prayer puts God first. HE is the one who will rule and care for Israel; the king should be a secondary human figure pointing people to God. In a word – 'It's all about God.' We are part of God's story, rather than God being part of our story.*

5. Look at Eli's sons in 1 Samuel 2. What do they tell you about the spiritual health of priests in that era? And in what sense does that explain the book of Judges?

*Eli's sons were morally bankrupt. With priests like that – the leaders and teachers and pastors of the people – it's no wonder that everyone else followed suit.*

6. 1 Samuel 2:31, 1 Samuel 3:13 & 3:20-21 mark a shift in the way that God communicates with his people. The priests technically remain, but their ability to speak prophetically into people's lives has diminished because of their own sin. Eli's house was in time ended (See 1 Samuel 14:3 and 1 Kings 2:27). Thus Samuel begins a line of prophets who hold God's people accountable by speaking His Word to them.

Genealogy of the Priests in David's Time



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7. When God calls to Samuel, Samuel seems to hear God. Should we expect to hear God audibly speak today?

*Nothing is impossible with God, but generally speaking, God will not speak audibly to us. Even in Samuel, Samuel was the only one God spoke directly to – Eli couldn't hear God's word and 3:20-21 imply that people came to hear God speak to them – thru Samuel.*

8. How does 1 Samuel 4:4 warn us against 'superstitious religion'? What can we do to avoid it today?

*By taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle, the Israelites were treating the sacred symbol of God's presence as a totem that they could wield for their own benefit. In their minds, God was a power that they could use against their enemies; God's simply not like that. He is 'for us' but He is entirely independent from us. We need to read God's Word to be sure that we are not thinking superstitiously about God and trying to manipulate Him for our benefit.*

9. There is always a balance to be had between 'relying on God' and 'taking responsible action.' The Israelites model it in chapter 7; what does it look like for us?

*Israel first committed themselves to God and seem to have truly trusted Him. Relying on Him to bring the victory, they made their preparations and trusted God to do the work. I think for us this means committing ourselves to the Lord, making our plans before the Lord and in light of His character and values and pursuing them in ways that honour Him.*

10. Chapter 8 starts to complicate Samuel's character. He seems deeply committed to YHWH and yet He is stubbornly opposed to kingship. Is it because he thinks kingship is inherently bad? Or is it because he kind of wishes that he could be king? Or maybe some sort of 'prophet king'?

who would maintain YHWH as the unquestioned king? Compare Deuteronomy 17:14-20 with 1 Samuel 8:11-18. Could you see Samuel playing that role? What does this ultimately tell us about putting God's will first and not holding grudges?

*Samuel has been providing leadership to Israel for many years now. He is the king described in Deuteronomy 17 in all but name and I wonder if he secretly wants to keep that position for himself. The question of his sons as suitable heirs certainly makes that a possibility. Why though he wants to keep being 'king in all but name' is a different question. I think Samuel sees himself as 'a good priest/king' to Israel, for the benefit of Israel, not for himself. He is concerned that the official king will not be God-centered like he was. And yet God did command Him to anoint that king. Sometimes we need to submit our own wisdom to the wisdom of God.*

11. 1 Samuel 10:17-25 and 1 Samuel 12 paint Samuel in an ambiguous light. He seems eager to chastise Israel for wanting a king but slow to actually appoint a king, even though God \*has\* permitted it. And he's still doing 'kingly things' like writing out the Law. 1 Samuel 12:24 suggests that Samuel's commitment is ultimately to God; how can we evaluate our motives and secret aspirations in light of our primary commitment to God?

*I think it's as simple as making sure that we revolve around God's purposes, rather than He around us.*

12. Read 1 Samuel 13, esp. 8-10. What do you make of Samuel's 'fashionably late' entrance? Nonetheless, Saul has overstepped his position (See Arnold side bar). Note Saul's superstitious attempt to control God in 1 Samuel 14:18-19.

*It's not clear why Samuel is so late in appearing. It's almost as if he is dragging his feet, resisting at every turn giving Israel the king they want and God has permitted.*

"Saul's conduct here suggests patience in the face of lengthening odds. Even the most hard-hearted reader would have to have some sympathy for the king's desperate plight!" (Keith Bodner, 1 Samuel, 120).

"He fails to accept the structures of authority established for him by YHWH and his prophet Samuel at the time of his appointment. This unfortunately is a pattern that will be repeated in chap. 15. Thus, Saul's guilt derives from his determination to usurp power rightly belonging only to YHWH and His servant Samuel" (Bill Arnold, NIVAC, 200-201).

13. 1 Samuel 15 sees Saul once again trying to gain God's favour by sacrifice, without truly honouring Him in his heart through obedience. As a consequence, the kingdom is taken from him (1 Samuel 15:22-35). Note v. 35 – "Samuel mourned for Saul." How does that impact our understanding of Samuel?

*For all the ambiguities in Samuel's character, he does seem legitimately concerned about people. I would posit that instead of mentoring Saul on how to be a good king, Samuel may simply have resisted him and now he regrets that decision?*

14. At this point, Samuel leaves Saul, thus leaving Saul disconnected from the word of God. Do we act like Saul and carry on without it or do we make God's Word and will the instrument panel of our lives?

15. 1 Samuel 16 is like a sunrise after a long, stormy night. Samuel goes to Jesse of Bethlehem to anoint one of his sons as king. What does verse 6 tell us about what God values?

*People are quick to judge according to outer appearances, but God sees the heart.*

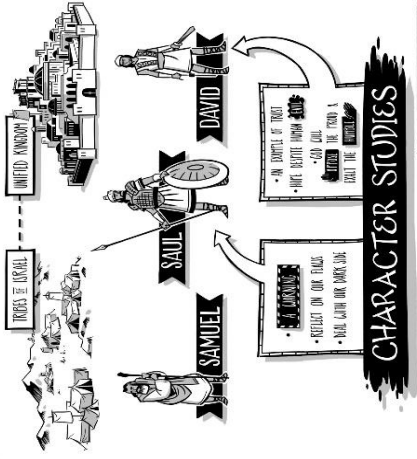
16. What are your final impressions about Samuel's life? What themes run throughout it? What lessons can we learn to apply in our own lives?

*Samuel exhibits a steadfast commitment to God – he is relentlessly fixed on the LORD and demonstrates what it means to be 'a servant of the LORD.' He trusts beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is working for good.*

*Samuel demonstrates the importance of prayer and close relationship with God.*

*Samuel though challenges us to consider how quick we are to do God's will – do we debate God's will in our heads or just do it? Careful discernment is good, but not if it prevents you from actually doing God's will.*

# SAMUEL



### RECAP

THE PROMISED KING

THE KING & HIS GOVERNMENT

PHAS JUDGES

## 2 SAMUEL 7

PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

KEY CHARACTER & BIBLICAL STORY

GENESIS 12: 1-3, 12, 15

ISAIAH 9: 1-6

PROMISE OF MESSIAH

FUTURE KING = TEMPLE = ETERNAL KINGDOM

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

## 2 SAMUEL

### 1-7

HANNAH'S SONG

HANNAH'S GRIEF & JOY

PHILISTINES VS ISRAEL

PHILISTINES VS ISRAEL

PHILISTINES VS ISRAEL

### 8-31

DAVID SEIZES THE POWER

DAVID SEIZES THE POWER

DAVID SEIZES THE POWER

### 1-20

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL

### 21-24

FAILURE OF SAUL

DAVID & HIS MIGHTY MEN

DAVID'S POETIC MEMOIRS

DAVID & HIS MIGHTY MEN

FAILURE OF DAVID

### 25-30

DAVID & BATHSHEBA

DAVID & BATHSHEBA

DAVID & BATHSHEBA

### 31-37

DAVID'S LAST DAYS

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