
1 SAMUEL

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OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

SESSION 1: Entering 1 Samuel

Entering Scripture

- What we are reading –
- How to read well:
 - o _____
 - o _____
 - o _____

Entering OT Narrative

- Let the story...
- Pay close attention to story features.
- Read each account on multiple levels:

Entering 1 Samuel

- Times of transition –
- Good leaders –
- Learning to live....

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What do you actually believe about the Bible? Where did these beliefs come from?
2. How does your current view of Scripture impact the way you read it? Do you see agreement or mismatch when you compare your beliefs about the Bible to your engagement with it?
3. What are some of your favorite stories? What do you love about them?
4. What do you know about 1 Samuel? What are you eager to learn?
5. How do you cope during times of (personal, family, or social) transition?
6. Do you think of yourself as a spiritual leader? Why or why not?

SESSION 2: Hannah's Child and Israel's God (1 Samuel 1)

A Story about Hannah...

- Hannah's Pain
- Hannah's Action
- Hannah's Child

A Story about Israel...

- Hannah, Samuel, and the Judges
- Hannah = Israel??

A Story about God...

- This is a God who...
- Our prayer as we set out to study 1 Samuel –

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Have you ever felt pain similar to Hannah's? Have you ever talked about it to anyone? Is now a good time?
2. When you don't get what you need, where do you turn?
3. Had you been Hannah, how frustrated would you have been with God before she finally got what she asked for?
4. In what ways does Hannah's situation parallel Israel's? How does it add to what's going on when we realize that Hannah's story is told to draw this connection?
5. Do you believe that God is what this story suggests? Why or why not?
6. Spend a few minutes talking to God about what you hope to gain from this study.

SESSION 3: Hannah's Song and Eli's Sons (1 Samuel 2)

Remembering 1 Samuel 1...

Hannah's Song (1 Sam 2:1-11)

- God will do for _____ what he has done for _____.
- This means bad news for someone, but whom???

Eli's Sons (1 Sam 2:12-36)

- They are corrupt _____.
 - o The job of a priest...
 - o How they perverted it...
- In comes an unnamed _____.

Takeaways:

- (1) Position and power are not reliable _____ of blessing.
- (2) Legit callings to not _____ leaders from corruption.
- (3) God _____ the leader who fails to hold the line.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What song perfectly represents a particular phase or season of your life? What about the song connects?
2. What kind of music would you play under Hannah's lyrics if it were set to sound? Why?
3. Read the song of Miriam in Exodus 15 and Deborah in Judges 5. What connections or similarities do you see?
4. What are some blind spots in your life that need to be exposed?
5. If God's reckoning came for the corrupt leaders in your community, where would that leave you?

SESSION 4: Samuel Hears the LORD (1 Samuel 3)

Opening Thoughts:

- The audacity of speaking on behalf of God...
- 1 Samuel 3 in context –
 - o Historical Context –
 - o Literary Context –

Qualifications to Speak:

- Note the absence of normal qualifications...
- Samuel has the right to speak words for God because...
- *She has the right to speak who has first listened to his Voice. He has the right to proclaim who has first heard God's Word.*

Takeaways

- (1) Mind your _____.
- (2) Mind your _____.
- (3) Listen to _____.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Have you ever sensed God communicating directly with you? What was that like? What did he say? What did you do?
2. How would you recognize God's voice if he did communicate directly with you? What would be the signs that it was him?
3. What is the most dangerous thing you've ever said to a person? If you were Samuel, on a scale of 1 to 10 how hesitant would you have been to deliver this message?
4. Spend some time prayerfully repeating the phrase "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" and write down anything you think you hear.
5. How much effort do you put into listening to the voice of God?

SESSION 5: Adventures of the Ark (1 Samuel 4-7)

Events in Order:

Battle of Aphek (4:1-11)

Eli officially out (4:12-22)

Ark vs Philistines (repentance) (5:1-6:16)

Ark vs Israelites (repentance) (6:17-7:2)

Samuel officially in (7:2-6)

Battle of Ebenezer (7:7-17)

What do we hear?

1. God will not be _____ by us.
2. God does not _____ us.
3. God blesses _____ who repent.

Who else do we see?

- Victory from apparent defeat –
- Taking upon himself the judgment for sin –

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Choose one or two of the events from this portion of 1 Samuel to go back and read. What do you notice this time through that adds to the picture? What other questions are raised?
2. Looking back at your journey with God and faith, when have you approached God as someone whose job was to help you succeed? Have you repented of this mentality?
3. How might you be treating God like this right now?
4. How does it make you feel that God does not need you? In what way is this a necessary conviction if we are going to serve him without doing damage to our souls?
5. In your own words, articulate where we see Jesus in this portion of the story?

SESSION 6: Israel Asks for a King (1 Samuel 8)

Hearing the Story...

What we learn about God:

- (1) God plans good things for those who _____ and _____.
- (2) God does not run the world the way _____ would if we were God.
- (3) God tests us to strengthen us but accommodates our _____.
- (4) God gives us fair _____ but lets us go our way.

What we learn about Sin:

- (1) Sin is driven by the fear that God cannot be trusted to ensure our _____.
- (2) Sin is fed by _____ of missing out.
- (3) Sin seeks to grasp right _____ what God intends to give in his own time and way.
- (4) Sin is deepened by our tendency to trust our _____ more than God's _____.

Will we let God...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. With what parts of the Bible have you the kind of experience described in the video?
How do those experiences impact you today?
2. If you were one of the Israelites, would you have agreed with the decision to ask for a king? Why or why not?
3. How many times have you made a foolish choice even after it was made clear to you that the choice was foolish?
4. What foolish choices are you making or still considering? Why?
5. How much does the perceived wellbeing of others tempt you to seek what they have?
6. Which of these aspects of sin is most relevant to your faith walk right now? What will you do not to fall?

SESSION 7: Israel's First King (1 Samuel 9-13)

Simple Overview:

*God and Samuel crown Saul king
Samuel delivers Israel
Saul disobeys Samuel and God*

Taking a Closer Look:

- Donkeys of Kish (9)
- Dinner with Samuel (9-10)
- Saul's Introduction (10)
- Saul's Victory (11)
- Samuel's Farewell (12)
- Saul's Disobedience (13)

Hearing the Word

- (1) Be careful what you _____ for.
- (2) Stories don't end where they _____.
- (3) What matters is not what you've done in the past, but whether you _____ right now.
- (4) Royal power is subservient to the _____ Word.

Questions of Reflection and Discussion:

1. Do you think the narrator is drawing more attention to the negative aspects of Saul, the positive aspects, or both? What is the point of telling the story in this way?
2. Go back and read one or two of the sections. What details do you notice and how do they confirm the general picture painted here of these events.
3. Do you think Saul had a fair complaint against Samuel (and God) in chapter 13? Why was it right for Samuel to respond so harshly?
4. In what ways are you currently obediently waiting but it's getting harder and harder not to do what seems best to you (even if apparently not to God)? What will you do?

SESSION 8: What God Might Do (1 Samuel 14)

Opening Thoughts

- People do strange things because they believe it is God's _____.
- People do strange things because they don't _____ what God wants.

Jonathan vs Philistines

- Israel in a crisis...
- Sometimes faith means risking it all for *what God* _____ *do*.
- Jonathan was...
 - un_____
 - un_____
 - un_____
 - un_____
- So what did Jonathan know?
 - God's _____
 - God's _____
- Here is the question for us: is that enough?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What is the weirdest thing you or someone you know has done because you believed it was God's will?
2. When have you felt most desperate to know what God wanted from you? What did you do to try and find out?
3. Are you more prone to wait for clear instructions or take the first step and see what happens? How might your tendency both help and at other times hinder a life of faith?
4. How does it make you feel to think about initiating something potentially crazy knowing only what God might do?
5. What might God be waiting for you to do? Will you do it?

SESSION 9: God's Kind of King (1 Samuel 14-16)

The Question: What kind of king does God want for his people?

Part 1 – Out with the Old (Saul's Demise)

- Against the Philistines...
- Against the Amalekites...

Part 2 – In with the New (David's Rise)

- Beginning anew...
 - o God "regretted" (back to Noah)
 - o David is one beyond the 7th (back to Adam)
- And this time the right way...

Takeaways:

- (1) Does our devotion to God run all the way down or is it merely skin deep?
- (2) How do we respond when admonished or rebuked?
- (3) In our evaluation of one another, do we value the things God values?
- (4) "Our failure does not signal God's defeat" (B. Arnold)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. In what ways can you see yourself in Saul?
2. Does *your* devotion to God run all the way down or is it merely skin deep?
3. How do *you* respond when admonished or rebuked?
4. In *your* evaluation of people, do *you* value the things God values?
5. In what ways does this introduction of David point beyond David to Jesus?

APPENDIX to SESSION 9 on Divine Violence

Divine violence is a complicated issue worthy of much study and reflection. I offer the following points not as a final statement, but because these things must be *considered* and *respected*. I am also not referring here specifically to 1 Samuel 15 but with respect to the issue more broadly.

- It is likely that many (if not all of the) cities Israel destroyed were military outposts and not places where civilians lived.
- Old Testament language of total obliteration might be intentional exaggeration – sort of like ancient military trash-talk that everyone knows not to take literally.
- Israel was “a rag-tag group of slaves going up against the mightiest imperial powerhouses of the ancient world” and many of her strategies were ridiculous from a military standpoint. All that to say, be careful not to picture a powerful empire picking on the weak.
- In some sense God met his people where they were at and took them where he wanted them to go. We read Scripture as a whole – as one unified narrative directed toward Jesus.
- Related to this, is it right to say that because of sin’s corrosive effect, God had to “get his hands dirty,” so to speak, as part of his larger mission to bring salvation?
- There is an impulse to cast the Canaanites (and others) as decent (even innocent) people who should have been left alone. Keep in mind that things like incest, infant sacrifice, ritual prostitution, and bestiality were part of their way of life.
- The New Testament teaches that God fully and finally revealed himself in and through Jesus (Jn 1.18; Heb 1.1-3). However, also keep in mind that (a) Jesus never repudiated the Old Testament, and (b) some of the harshest threats in the Bible come from his mouth.
- We believe in the resurrection, which means death is not the end of life. This is particularly relevant to the deaths of children. Given the Bible’s witness to an “age of accountability” (Deut 2.37-40; Isa 7.15-16), all who were truly “innocent” will spend eternity with Jesus.
- Connected to this, we must always remember that we evaluate all of life from an eternal lens. Much of history will not make sense apart from the perspective of eternity.
- Having said all this, let’s also remember not to approach these questions with a detached or de-sensitized attitude. Real people died (some in horrific ways). The Bible says God is responsible for their deaths. The Bible also says God is love and that his love is most clearly revealed on the cross. These things may be hard to reconcile in a totally satisfactory way.
- Finally, God’s primary demand is that we trust him. When we try to figure things out apart from submission to his Word, bad things happen. Adam and Eve specifically ate from a tree of *knowledge of good and evil*, which may represent our efforts to determine right and wrong apart from simple submission to what God has said. God doesn’t have to meet our standards or make perfect sense to us – that’s not how it works. God is the standard. God is God and God is good. We don’t get to tell him what he has to be and do to be good.
- Here are some links to short pieces with these points and others.
 - o Jonathan Merritt interviews Copan and Flannagan – <http://goo.gl/gstnDt>
 - o Joshua Ryan Butler on “The Hope of Holy War” – <http://goo.gl/F8pKXv>
 - o Summary of Copan’s arguments in *Is God a Moral Monster?* – <https://goo.gl/f4Udrk>
 - o A response to Richard Dawkins on genocide in Scripture – <http://goo.gl/UJwjcV>
- Here are some longer treatments to check out if you’re interested:
 - o *Did God Really Command Genocide?* (Paul Copan and Matt Flannagan)
 - o *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Paul Copan)
 - o *The Skeletons in God’s Closet* (Joshua Ryan Butler)
 - o *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the OT Angry, Sexist and Racist?* (David Lamb)
 - o *The God I Don’t Understand* (Christopher Wright)

SESSION 10 – David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

What more could be said about David and Goliath?

Interpreting the Story

- Setting:
- Characters:
 - o Goliath –
 - o Saul –
 - o David –
- Action:
 - o What do we learn from the speeches that we can't miss??
 - o The battle (if you can call it that)

Takeaways

- (1) God empowers faithful servants to beat the _____.
- (2) God raises up underdogs committed to _____ mission and glory.
- (3) _____ alone is the true Son of David...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Up to this point, what has been your experience of the story of David and Goliath?
2. What details were you surprised by that you hadn't noticed before?
3. In what ways might we read this story that would be unfaithful to its actual meaning and therefore unhelpful?
4. When have you seen God empower you to beat the odds as you sought to faithfully live for his honor?
5. How does this text apply to us as a church in our day?
6. Why is it important to see this text as more about Christ than about ourselves?

SESSION 11: Saul Pursues David (1 Samuel 18-31)

The Events of 1 Samuel 18-31

- David's rise and Saul's envy (18)
- Everyone chooses a side (19-20)
- David on the Run (21-22)
- Saul on the Hunt (22-23)
- David spares Saul's life (24-26)
- David among the Philistines (27-30)
- Saul's story comes to an end (31)

Themes and Takeaways

- (1) God's rejection of Saul and protection of David.
- (2) Saul's maniacal (envious) pursuit of David.
- (3) David's "rise" and resistance to vengeance.
- (4) Jonathan's humble deference to David.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Which of these stories would you most want to study further?
2. Go back and read whatever story you just mentioned and make note of 2-4 details that seem significant. How do these support or adjust the bigger picture just presented?
3. What can we do so that we get to receive God's support rather than his rejection?
4. Where has envy crept in and kept a hold on your mind?
5. Why is it so important that David not seek vengeance? How likely are you to follow his example in this regard?
6. How does Jonathan look like John the Baptist, and what we can learn from both of them?

SESSION 12: Abigail's Intervention (1 Samuel 25)

Reading Abigail's Story on Multiple Levels

- Abigail prevents unnecessary _____.
- Abigail saves David from becoming _____.
 - o One of David's chief qualifications for kingship...
 - o Nabal as "Saul's alter ego" (P. Leithart)
- Abigail contrasts _____.
- Abigail echoes Samuel and prefigures _____.

Takeaways

- (1) The critical participation of women in God's redemptive mission.
 - o She honors God by undermining her foolish husband...
 - o She fights like...
- (2) God allows us to be tested but always provides a way out. (1 Cor 10:13; 1 Samuel 25:32)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Who are some of your female giants of the faith? What do we (all!) gain by having faith heroes and heroines (i.e. both male and female models)?
2. Do you properly respect and celebrate the critical place of women in God's redemptive mission? (How would other women in your life answer this question?)
3. Are you more likely to have a problem with Abigail leading, or with the fact that even though she leads the story ends with her taking her place as wife to the king?
4. How might we all patiently allow the Word to discipline our convictions with respect to both men and women?
5. Where might you have ignored the "Abigails" in your life – i.e. those God has sent to warn you of going down a dangerous path?

SESSION 13: Saul and the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28)

Hearing the Story

- Setting the Scene
- Details that Drive Home Saul's Depravity:
 - o Pun on "asking"...
 - o Removing his robes...
 - o Promises protection in Yahweh's name...
 - o Possible overtones from the meal...
 - o Pervasiveness and growth of *fear*...
- Samuel's Response

Questioning the Story

- What is the meaning in context?
- Is this real?
- What do we do with this today?
 - (1) Stay away from actual magic.
 - (2) Don't confuse magic and faith.
 - (3) Turn to the Word.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. How surprised are you at just how far Saul falls? Why?
2. Under what circumstances would you resort to consulting to something like what we see in the text? Why?
3. Google "Christian witches" and follow a few of the top links. Are you surprised by this? What would you say to a friend considering mixing Christianity with witchcraft?
4. In what ways have you approached religion as if it were almost a magic formula to get God to do what you want or need?
5. Though you may never turn to magic or the occult, where might you turn for wisdom we should seek from what God has revealed in Scripture?

SESSION 14: Exiting 1 Samuel

Encouragements as we Exit 1 Samuel:

(1) _____ to 1 Samuel and learn more.

(2) _____ journeying from here.

- Turn the page to 2 Samuel!
- *What counts at the moment is not how your story began or where it is right now, but where it goes from here.*

(3) Take _____ what we have seen.

- About God...
 - o Aseity –
 - o Sovereignty/Providence –
- About Sin...
 - o Mind what you hear...
 - o Mind what you fear...
- About Discipleship...
 - o The obvious one: _____
 - o The not-so-obvious one: accept _____

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Which of the things mentioned in this video already stood out to you as “lessons learned” from studying 1 Samuel?
2. What else have you learned or received from the Lord through this study?
3. What portion of 1 Samuel would you love to study further or know better? How will you go about fulfilling this desire?
4. If you had to identify one thing you think God is calling you to do in response to 1 Samuel, what would it be? Do it!