

The Story of 1 Samuel

A 40-Day Guided Journey through 1 Samuel



DailyLife
Five Oaks Church
Week 1: May 9-15

Day 1

May 11



Pray | Ask God to speak to you through his Word, the Bible

As we launch 1 Samuel, you might want to read some background to the book in a study Bible. Five Oaks recommends the *ESV Study Bible* and the *NIV Study Bible*. *The Life Application Study Bible* is also very helpful. All can be found in print, online, and mobile versions. You may also want to check out a six-minute summary of 1 Samuel at <https://vimeo.com/37541480>.

From a chronological perspective, 1 Samuel follows Judges. Judges recounts the dark days when God's people did what was right in their own eyes and reaped the consequences: mass murder, rampant rape, foreign oppression, and chaos. As 1 Samuel opens, we are still in that period, but God is about to do a new thing. And it all begins with the bold prayer of a woman who is made to feel worthless by her husband's other wife and by a society that devalues women who do not bear children.



Read | 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection

Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord. Although your circumstances are obviously different, parenting is always a matter of stewardship. What are the real and deep implications for you when you dedicate your children to God?

Hannah is driven to God and to prayer by her deep distress. The result is a son who will anoint King David, the most important king to ever rule Israel. David will be an important figure for Israel's delivery, but also in the bigger story of God: Jesus, the anointed (that is, Messiah) king will be his descendant. What light does this shed on your past, present, or future distress?

“Every time God lifts you out of the miry bog and sets your feet upon a rock is a sample of the coming of the kingdom of God, a down payment of the full deliverance . . . that will be yours at last. [These] are only samples or signs of the final salvation.”¹ Spend some time recalling the “samples and signs” God has granted to you, and give thanks and praise to God for them.

¹. Dale Ralph Davis, *First Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 25.

Day 2

May 12



Pray / Ask God to speak to you through his Word, the Bible

It's hard for the people of God or for a church to flourish when its leaders care nothing about God.

Eli, the high priest, has two sons who are “worthless men” (1 Samuel 2:12), thugs, and sexually abusive and immoral. And everyone knows it, including Eli, who allows it to continue. Things do not bode well for Israel under these conditions.

This sad state of affairs is totally depressing, if not for notes of hope inserted repeatedly in the telling of this narrative—notes that feature Samuel growing up in the Lord and serving him in spite of everything. God is at work behind the scenes, but the participants in the story are not aware of what God is doing.



Read / 1 Samuel 2:11-36



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection

How can this account help you learn to trust that God is still at work, even when the circumstances are depressing and distressing?

Parenting is a matter of stewardship. Christian parents know their children belong to God, and he has placed them in their care as a trust. What are some of the lessons you can learn about the stewardship of our children from Eli and Hannah (see especially verses 21 and 29)?

Sometimes we are called to take action in accordance with God's Word that will be hurtful to someone we love or that will ruffle the feathers of someone whose approval we seek. There is a difference between taking action that harms (done hatefully) versus taking action that hurts (done lovingly). Reflect on an action that God may be calling you to take and how you should do it.

Day 3

May 13



Pray / Ask God to speak to you through his Word, the Bible

If the words of God are a light for our path, failing to listen to his words is a walk in darkness.

1 Samuel 3 begins a new era in the life of Israel. Not since Moses has Israel had a prophet of God living among them, speaking God's Word to the people.

God's prophet comes to break this time of silence: "The word of the Lord was rare in those days" (1 Samuel 3:1). Light for the path is returning. Samuel will carry the light of God's Word for the people of Israel.

But Samuel will need to learn to hear God when he speaks. Samuel also will need to learn that sometimes the message will be hard to convey when it's a tough word of judgment and you care about the people to whom it is addressed. He will have to learn how to deliver it. Eli will be his teacher on both counts.



Read / 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1a



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection

We have the Word of God in the Bible, but how might our actions and attitudes cause God to “go silent” in our lives?

What do you learn about God from his interactions with Samuel in this chapter?

What is your part in increasing or maintaining a healthy appetite for God’s Word?

Day 4

May 14



Pray / Ask God to speak to you through his Word, the Bible

If you have a deep spiritual question, ask God about it, search his Word, and wait until you hear from him or find the answer in his Word.

The Israelites and their leaders ask a deep spiritual question after losing a battle with the Philistines: “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” (1 Samuel 4:3). However, they neither consult the Mosaic Law nor wait for an answer. What they do instead is more akin to manipulation or a superficial understanding of how God works in their lives.



Read / 1 Samuel 4:1b-4:11



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection

Taking the ark into battle was a way of trying to manipulate God while avoiding the real causes of their defeat (that is, their disobedience). They think, *If we have the ark, God's reputation will be on the line, and he will be forced to win.* Reflect on the following insight by Dale Ralph Davis: “Yahweh will suffer shame rather than allow you to carry on a false relationship with him; and Yahweh will allow you to be disappointed with him if it will awaken you to the sort of God he really is.”²

In what ways are you trying to pressure or control God into doing what you want him to do or think he should do for you?

If you remember some of the bold prayers of Moses, he sometimes called on God to act in order to protect God's own reputation among the nations. How might that be different or similar to what the elders do in this passage?

². Dale Ralph Davis, *First Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 55.

Day 5

May 15



Pray / Ask God to speak to you through his Word, the Bible

Even in his acts of judgment, the grace of God is still at work.

The ark of covenant was an important part of the tabernacle and, later, the temple. It was a gold-covered box about half the size of a coffin. It contained copies of the Ten Commandments. It represented God's leadership of his people, God's mercy for his people, and God's presence with his people. Losing the ark was an act of judgment on Israel, but the next chapter shows how God also judged Israel's enemy through this defeat. Grace for his people is at work in this defeat.

Eli and his two evil sons die—another act of judgment that removes neglectful and corrupt leadership, making room for God's prophet to begin his ministry to God's people. God's people, though undeserving, needed another leader—another act of his grace.



Read / 1 Samuel 4:12-22



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection

How have you experienced God's grace through his judgment or discipline?

We experience the silence of God for many reasons. Our own damaged emotions may be the primary cause. False ideas about a life of walking with God, or expecting things to go well or that God owes us something, can get in the way of experiencing his presence. But it is quite possible that God withholds a sense of his presence (but not himself) from a follower of Christ. Why are some of the reasons God might, from time to time, withdraw a sense of his presence in our lives?

Reflect on the words of H. L. Ellison regarding Phinehas's wife's words in 1 Samuel 4:22: "But she was wrong. The glory of God had indeed departed, but not because the ark of God had been captured; the ark had been captured because the glory of God had already departed."³

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³. Quoted in Dale Ralph Davis, *First Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 57.

