



1 Samuel Bible Studies

Bible Study Series 2026

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Please note that not all of 1 Samuel will be read during the studies, so I would encourage you to read the sections that are not a part of the studies.

1 Samuel

“He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

This verse is found in Hannah’s prayer of 1 Samuel 2, setting up the rest of the book thematically and theologically. 1 Samuel is set after the book of Judges, which ends with a reminder as to the state of the Israelites: ‘In those days Israel has no king; everyone did as they saw fit.’ This is the bleak picture that 1 Samuel finds itself in, but we quickly realise that God has a plan for the Israelites.

The book opens with Hannah and her desperation for a son, which is fulfilled with the birth of Samuel, a son that she entrusts to the Lord. We see him grow up and begin to minister under Eli, a priest, though it is clear that Samuel is looked upon with favour from the Lord. Samuel takes leadership over Israel, though it is not long before the people request to have a King ‘like the nations,’ - a request that is granted with the anointing and institution of Saul – Israel’s first King. But we quickly realise that this is not the kind of King that we had been expecting- Saul is jealous, anxious, a people pleaser, and unfaithful to God. So, it is not surprising when he is ultimately rejected by God, who then finds ‘a man after his own heart’ in David – a young shepherd boy- a complete 180° from Saul. This does not come as a shock however, as God highlights that he looks at things that people do not look at – the heart! Saul is still King, and quickly grows fearful of David, attempting to kill David numerous times, causing him to flee for his life. The book ends with the bleak suicide of Saul and the death of his 3 sons, leaving us wondering what will happen next...

Study 1: 1 Samuel 1:1- 4:1 – The Rise of Samuel

What is the greatest gift you have ever been given, and why?

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-28

1. What challenges do we see for Hannah and her family?
2. How do we see Hannah's character displayed throughout this chapter?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11

3. Looking at the whole prayer – what do you think are the main themes throughout it?
4. Based on the main themes you've pulled out, what events and stories should we be expecting to see throughout the rest of the book?

Read 1 Samuel 2: 18-21, 26, 3:1-4:1a

5. What can we learn about God from these passages?

6. We saw Hannah's desperation and how her outlet was prayer. Jesus teaches us to pray in Matthew 6:5-15: what can we learn about how we should pray? What assurances does Jesus make for us when we pray?

7. Spend some time reflection alone or in small groups on these questions:

- Do you ever find yourself praying similarly to Hannah?
- Do you ask God when you have things you desire?
- Have you ever poured out your soul to the Lord?
- How can you remind yourself to turn to prayer more regularly as a first instinct?

Pray

Spend some time putting into practise what we have learnt about prayer! Pray the Lord's Prayer as a group and then spend some time praying alone or in pairs – make sure to pray that turning to the Lord in prayer will become an instinct!

Study 2: 1 Samuel 4-7 – Israel’s Holy God

Have you ever lost something very precious to you – how did you feel?

Read 1 Samuel 4:1b-22

1. What do you think was the reasoning behind bringing the Ark of the Covenant onto the battlefield?

2. Why would God allow the Ark to fall into Philistine hands?

Read 1 Samuel 5:1-7:2

3. What do verses 5:1-8 show us about God? What do they show us about idols in our own lives?

4. How have we seen God’s holiness throughout these chapters? What does this mean for us and how we live our lives?

Read 1 Samuel 7:3-7:15

5. Split into small groups to complete the table. In this passage we can see a foreshadow of Jesus! Fill out the table to see the parallels:

	What is Jesus doing?	How do we see the foreshadowing of this in the passage?
Hebrews 4:14-15, 7:23-28		
Luke 5:31-32, Matthew 4:17		
Romans 3:25a, 1 Peter 1:18-19		

6. How is the Israelites reaction in verses 2b-8 different to their earlier battles?

7. Samuel's words in verse 3 speak to us today; while we might not be worshipping Ashtoreth, we all struggle to keep God as the only one we serve. What are some practical ways we can follow in the footsteps of the Israelites in verse 4 and put away our idols to follow God today?

Pray

Split into smaller groups and pray for one another- that God might show you the idols that you have to remove from your life and pray that we can respond as the Israelites did in 7:1-4! Thank God for his holiness and sovereignty over everything.

Study 3: 1 Samuel 8-12 – Israel’s First King: The Rise of Saul

If you became the ruler of Australia for a day, what would be your first decree?

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22

1. What do you think drove the desire for the Israelites to have their own king? Why doesn’t Samuel like the request?

2. How does Samuel warn that the King will treat the Israelites? Why would the Israelites agree to that?

3. Why does God let the Israelites have a King?

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-10:27

4. What do we see of Saul from these chapters? Why might God have picked him to be King?

5. Saul is God's 'anointed one,' - one who has been set apart for a special purpose – to be Israel's King! We also get to see Jesus being anointed: read Mark 14:1-9 and discuss what the purpose behind Jesus' anointing was.

Read 1 Samuel 11:12-12:25

6. What do you think Samuel is doing by bringing up the Israelite's history?

7. Samuel is clear that the Israelites did 'an evil thing' by asking for a King- spend a few minutes reflecting on ways that you might be rejecting God as king (8:7,12:17,19) or running from him (10:20-22). What are some ways that you can remedy that this week?

Pray

Spend some time in prayer, following Samuel's final words: 'But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.' Thank God for the great things he has done in your life, asking him to help you follow him with all your heart.

Study 4: 1 Samuel 13-14 – Saul’s downfall

What is the most obscure or exotic thing you have eaten? Have you ever regretted eating anything?

Read 1 Samuel 13:1-14:23

1. What do we see of Saul’s ability to lead his people here?
2. Why did Saul go ahead with the sacrifices instead of waiting for Samuel?
3. Why was it wrong for Saul to offer the sacrifice to God? (refer to 1 Samuel 10:8, and ahead to 14:35)
4. How do we see Jonathan leaning on God as opposed to his own strength?

Read 1 Samuel 14:24-52

5. How does verse 24 help us to understand Saul's heart more? How do we see Jonathan respond differently?

6. Why do you think Saul responds so harshly to Jonathan's cursing when we have seen his disregard for genuine commands from God previously?

7. These passages seem to be setting up a direct contrast between Saul and Jonathon. Spend some time reflecting on who you identify with more: do you find yourself falling into a legalistic and fearful understanding of God, trusting more on your own works, or do you more often lean into God and trust on him to set your path?

8. Jonathon clearly trusts the Lord to guide him on the correct path-submitting to God's will for him. This is also seen in Jesus in John 6:38: 'For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.' How can you spend more time listening to God, trusting in his will for you?

Pray

Pray the words of Proverbs 3:5-6 together, that our hearts might trust in the Lord and not in ourselves. Pray that we might be able to submit to God's plan for our lives.

Study 5: 1 Samuel 15 – Saul’s End

What Bible story do you think would be the best to see in a movie? It can be a minor passage you think would make a great back-and-forth, or an epic saga that would be amazing on the big screen!

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-53, Exodus 17:8-16

1. What is Israel’s history with the Amalekites?
2. Why do you think that Saul saved what was ‘good’ in verse 9? What were the ‘weak and despised’ things that were destroyed?
3. What do you think made Saul think he carried out God’s instructions?
4. We seem to have contradicting statements made in this passage! How can we reconcile verses 11, 29 and 35b?

5. What does Samuel's response to Saul in verse 22 show us about offering sacrifices and obeying God?

6. Hebrews 10:1-14 has a lot to say about sacrifices. How does Hebrews help us to understand what Samuel was saying in verse 22?

7. Why do you think Saul struggles to do what the Lord asked him to do? Spend some time reflecting on areas in your life where you find it hard to do what God says to do. Are there areas of your life where you are 'offering sacrifices' instead of truly obeying God?

Pray

Sin is a universal issue- we all struggle with disregarding what God has told us to do in scripture. Spend time praying for one another to put aside sin and clothe ourselves in righteousness:

Romans 13:14- Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Study 6: 1 Samuel 16-17 – the Rise of David

Have you ever been chosen for something really special? An award, a presentation, something unexpected?

Read 1 Samuel 16

1. What is significant about David being anointed? Why was he chosen as God's anointed?
2. We have a direct contrast between verses 13 and 14 – the Spirit leaving one and coming on the other., What other contrasts can we see between Saul and David in this chapter?

Read 1 Samuel 17 (you might want to act out this story!)

3. How is David different to Saul and the other Israelites when he hears Goliath's call?
4. What have we seen about David that makes him qualified to take down Goliath?

5. How can we see the themes of Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) played out in this narrative?

6. Ultimately, we see Jesus as the one Hannah spoke of in verse 10 of her prayer. While David was given strength to take down Goliath, Jesus was given strength to take down our true enemy: sin. How do the following verses help us to understand God's power over sin?

- Colossians 2:13-15

- 1 Peter 2:24

- Jude 24

7. How can we be encouraged by these verses? What truths do we see that should impact the way we live?

Pray

Thank God for his power! We worship a God of strength, so spend time praying thanking God for his defeat of sin!

Study 7: 1 Samuel 18-23 – David on the run

What is a non-essential item that you couldn't live without?

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-19:10

1. How do we see Saul reacting to David across this passage? How does seeing some of Saul's thoughts help us to understand his motives?

David is on the run! Jonathon is shown that his father intends to kill David, and mourns the departure of his friend. As he flees, David finds a priest who provides him with bread and a weapon before he briefly pretends to be insane! **Read 1 Samuel 22:1-23**

2. How do we see Saul's paranoia and fear in this passage?

3. What can we see about David and how people respond to him?

Read 1 Samuel 23:6-17

4. We have seen a lot of the relationship between Jonathon and David – one characterised by love. How does verse 16 develop our understanding of what we are to do in love for one another?

5. What can we learn from David's first response when hearing that Saul was pursuing him once more? (Refer to Psalm 59: 1-5, 17, which was written when Saul first began to try and kill David!)

6. Read Matthew 26:36-39. What can we learn from Jesus in this passage, especially how he prays?

7. David's reliance on God is clear from the passages we've read (including Psalm 59). What are some ways that you find yourself in reliance on God? Are there people, sins, circumstances that you feel like you can't fully give over to God?

Pray

Thank God for his faithfulness! Pray that we might find ourselves relying on God instead of ourselves or others! Pray that he will be the centre of our lives and that we might turn to him first!

Study 8: 1 Samuel 24-31 – Kingly Character: Saul vs David

If you had to write a sentence to sum up your life, what would you write?

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-25:1

1. Knowing what we saw of Saul's bloodlust last study, what makes David so radical in this chapter? What makes Saul's response unusual?

2. We see the first time that Saul understands that it is David who is the neighbour that God spoke of back in chapter 15: 'The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours—to one better than you.' (1 Samuel 15:28) What do you think this admission means for Saul?

Read 1 Samuel 26

3. Saul has continued to follow David into the desert! What do David's actions show Saul?

Read 1 Samuel 28:3-20

4. What makes Saul go against his own decree and seek out a medium?

5. What is significant about what Samuel says?

Read 1 Samuel 31:1-6

6. Saul has met his end alongside his 3 sons, ending the book of 1 Samuel. What expectations of 2 Samuel does this leave us with?

7. Across 1 Samuel we have seen a lot of Saul and David -how are we left feeling about each of them?

8. The difference between Saul and David was their dependence on God, which for Christians today is seen as obedience and faith in Christ, God's Son. What do the following verses have to say about faith and obedience?

- James 1:22-25

- Matthew 16:24-26

- John 14:15

- Galatians 2:20

9. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 sums up how the Chronicler felt about Saul's life. Spend some time reflecting on how others might write a similar summary of you now – would you be characterised as unfaithful as Saul was? Or would you be summarised as 'lukewarm,' only leaning on God when it's beneficial to you? Or maybe you could be 'a man after God's own heart' as David was? Discuss in small groups how you can be more obedient to Christ this week.

Pray

Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for our time in 1 Samuel and pray for him to shape us to look more like Jesus, the one who was perfect in obedience even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

Notes:

Prayer Points:

