



BY FAITH

MAY 24 - AUG 2

(10) "Samuel"

HIGHLIGHT: Selected verses from 1 Samuel

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Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

1:12-18

12 As she was praying to the Lord, Eli watched her. **13** Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. **14** "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!"

15 "Oh no, sir!" she replied. "I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the Lord. **16** Don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow."

17 "In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."

18 "Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad.

2:1-2, 26

1 Then Hannah prayed:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord!

The Lord has made me strong.

Now I have an answer for my enemies;

I rejoice because you rescued me.

2

No one is holy like the Lord!

There is no one besides you;

there is no Rock like our God.

26 Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew taller and grew in favor with the Lord and with the people.

3:7, 19

7 Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before.

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19 As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him, and everything Samuel said proved to be reliable.

7:3-5, 13-15

3 Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you want to return to the Lord with all your hearts, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Turn your hearts to the Lord and obey him alone; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." **4** So the Israelites got rid of their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the Lord.

5 Then Samuel told them, "Gather all of Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you."

....

13 So the Philistines were subdued and didn't invade Israel again for some time. And throughout Samuel's lifetime, the Lord's powerful hand was raised against the Philistines. **14** The Israelite villages near Ekron and Gath that the Philistines had captured were restored to Israel, along with the rest of the territory that the Philistines had taken. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites in those days.

15 Samuel continued as Israel's judge for the rest of his life.

8:4-7

4 Finally, all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. **5** "Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have."

6 Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. **7** "Do everything they say to you," the Lord replied, "for they are rejecting me, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer..."

12:3-4, 20-25

3 Now testify against me in the presence of the Lord and before his anointed one. Whose ox or donkey have I stolen? Have I ever cheated any of you? Have I ever oppressed you? Have I ever taken a bribe and perverted justice? Tell me and I will make right whatever I have done wrong."

4 "No," they replied, "you have never cheated or oppressed us, and you have never taken even a single bribe."

...

20 "Don't be afraid," Samuel reassured them. "You have certainly done wrong, but make sure now that you worship the Lord with all your heart, and don't turn your back on him. **21** Don't go back to worshiping worthless idols that cannot help or rescue you—they are totally useless! **22** The Lord will not

abandon his people, because that would dishonor his great name. For it has pleased the Lord to make you his very own people.

23 “As for me, I will certainly not sin against the Lord by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right. **24** But be sure to fear the Lord and faithfully serve him. Think of all the wonderful things he has done for you. **25** But if you continue to sin, you and your king will be swept away.”

EXPLAIN

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone’s understanding of the Word.

Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* describes London and Paris before and during the French Revolution: “It was the the best of times, it was the worst of times,...it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the season of hope, it was the winter of despair.” The book of 1 Samuel could not start that way. It’s storyline would be *it was the worst of times, it was the season of Darkness, it was the winter of despair*. Israel was in another of its downward spirals. The spiritual leadership was corrupt (see 1 Samuel 1:12, 17, 22-25). We all know what happens when the blind lead the blind. It was “the worst of times.” This was the world Samuel was born into.

THE BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL

1:12-18 Samuel was born to a mother who had lost hope (1:2, 7). She had nowhere to turn but to the Lord in deep anguish and bitter cries (1:9-11). Hannah discovered the joy and **peace** that comes from giving our sorrows and frustrations to the Lord who stops the fiery arrows of the devil (Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:7-9a; Philippians 4:6-7). “O what peace we often forfeit,/ O what needless pain we bear,/ All because we do not carry/ Everything to God in prayer!” (“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”—Joseph M. Scriven. Hannah did have a son (1:20) and fulfilled her vow to the Lord (1:11, 27).

2:1-2, 26 Hannah was quick to express her praise to God and to acknowledge in a public way that the favor she received was from **the Lord who made [her] strong and rescued [her]** from her despair. We will all come to a time when we need the **Rock like our God—the one who is holy**—different from all others. Micah asks, “Where is another God like [Him]?” (6:18). When it comes to God, let’s make sure our praises outrun our petitions.

One wonders what Samuel’s life would have been like if he had not had godly parents. While every child has to make their own decisions, godly parenting, at the least, points them in the right direction. **Samuel grew in favor with the Lord and with people**. It was obvious to those who watched Samuel that he was *different* from Eli’s sons and the other spiritual leaders. We all long for someone who can lead us out of the season of Darkness and into the season of Light. And we all need to be leading others in their walk with the Lord.

3:7, 19 This chapter has the famous conversation between Samuel and Eli about the voice Samuel was hearing (3:2-10). Communication between God and humans was very rare. God would not send His word to people like Eli’s sons who would not listen. He sends His word where it will “prosper and accomplish what He wants it to” (Isaiah 55:11). Samuel thought Eli was calling because **Samuel did not yet know**

[experience in a personal and intimate way] the Lord. Because of that he did not recognize God and could not acknowledge Him. **He had never had a message from the Lord before.** There are many who know *about* Lord but never know Him in a personal way. There are many who can give the right answers, but don't know what the right answer means. You can say *not so* and *Lord*, but you cannot say *not so, Lord* (see Matthew 16:16-17, 21-24). Until we personally know the Lord we will constantly see things from a *human point of view, not God's*.

Eli's sons had "no respect, no regard" for the Lord (2:12). This is the same Hebrew word translated "know" in 3:7). Once Samuel knew *Who* it was that was speaking to him and *respected* the message, **everything [he] said proved to be reliable**, and he was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. We can never lead others until we "follow Jesus" because He knows the way!

7:3-5, 13-15 Samuel is positioned to be the new leader of Israel. His life is fraught with challenges as the other judges experienced before him. But he proves himself a true leader. His love for the Lord leads him to call for repentance and revival. It's no game for Samuel. He knows these people and their tendency to say the right things. But he tells them that their way back to the Lord will only come **if you are really serious**. Repentance is necessary. And that means they must **get rid of their foreign gods and images and worship only the Lord**. Only **the Lord can rescue**.

Every week we are called from the stage of Southern Hills to turn around and follow the Lord. For most of us that means surrendering our idols of lust, power, fame, money; our idols of recognition at work, respect at home, notoriety at church—whatever means more to us than God. Samuel's message penetrated the darkness of the people's hearts. There was **peace** in the land, for God can conquer the most enemy—the human heart. What treasure Samuel was to Israel. He was worth more than all their armaments. He was worth more than all their treasures. This one man's life—his character and devotion to God—had been Israel's salvation.

8:4-7 Samuel's heart was **displeased** when the people **requested a king to judge over them like all the other nations had**. Their request was understandable: **Samuel was old, and his sons were not like him** (8:1-3). The people saw no resolution to their problem other than a new system—a king like other nations. But the Lord tells Samuel to give them everything they want—**"they don't want me to be their king any longer**. Ever since I brought them out of Egypt they abandoned Me. Give them what they want, but warn them about that decision (8:9-18). This is not a good world to be bad in. When "God abandons us to do what our hearts desire" it will be the worst of times (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

12:3-4, 20-25 Samuel spends the rest of his days trying to rein in a self-centered, rebellious king named Saul, and save the kingdom by keeping David alive to take the throne after Saul's death (1 Samuel 13—24). Some of Samuel's most memorable words were spoken to Saul when he again follows his own heart instead of obeying the Lord: "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols" (15:22). What appears to be final words—at least to the nation of Israel—he asks the people to affirm the integrity of his leadership. They declare that **[his] hands are clean. [He] has never cheated or oppressed [them], [he] has never taken even a single bribe**.

His pastor's heart radiates in vv.20-25: assuring them of the Lord's goodness—that **the Lord will not abandon His people, because that would dishonor His great name**; and assuring them of his own faithfulness to them—he **will never end his prayers for them or fail to teach them what is right**. Blessed is the church that has a leader who loves them like that.

Samuel is not known for mighty miracles and great military victories. He is known for listening to the Lord and faithfully living out what he heard. That is the kind of person who can lead nations, communities, churches, families, and his own life. No wonder he is listed in the Faith Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11:32).

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APPLY

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How does Samuel demonstrate faith in God?
3. Read Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Why did she pray this? What sticks out to you in her prayer?
4. Read Samuel's indictment of idols in 1 Samuel 12:21. They cannot help, they cannot rescue, and they are totally useless. As you have wrestled with your own idol worship, how have you seen that Samuel's statement about idols is true?
5. In 1 Samuel 8, the Elders of Israel say to Samuel: "Give us a king to judge us *like all the other nations have*" (emphasis added). God comforts Samuel with the reality that Israel is rejecting God, not Samuel. Israel is not supposed to be like the other nations. Israel is meant to be set apart. In what way(s) can all sin be traced back to a rejection of God in favor of something else?

RESPOND

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. Anything we worship other than God is an idol. Idols are often represented by self, power, opinion, material items, ill-placed desires, and many others. What are some idols you have struggled with and how have you turned from them to worship God?

What are idols you currently struggle with and how will you turn from them to worship God?

2. Hannah discovered the joy and peace that comes from giving our sorrows and frustrations to the Lord. (1Samuel 1:8-18) Read Philippians 4:6-7. What sorrow and/or frustration do you need to give to God? How can you go about doing it this week?