



1 Samuel 1-17

Community Group Studies | 2025 – Term 4

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Why 1 Samuel?

From Hannah to Samuel to Saul to David, 1 Samuel provides us with some of the most famous Biblical characters and stories. It also covers a major transition in the way God's people (Israel) governed themselves from tribes and judges to having an earthly king. It's a dramatic, funny, and honest account that keeps showing us how difficult and impossible it proved for God's people to recognise God as their ultimate and sovereign King. Through each of the characters, we see how flawed humans like ourselves can still be used by God to achieve His purposes. And, it also provides great contrast between Saul, a king like all the nations have, to David a king after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), all the while, helping us look forward to the king we have come to know in Jesus. While there is tension, Samuel shows us how an earthly king can, but not very often does, exist without threatening God's kingship. There is an unresolved tension in the book as God's people are always longing for a better king on the throne, who will rule with justice and righteousness.

Structure & Overview

1 Samuel is a straightforward story (Continuing into 2 Samuel, originally, they were one book), with a few interlocking chapters that are a bit like puzzle pieces that join the sections together. These key chapters single the end of one section or character and move us on to another. These key pieces take us from Samuel's leadership to Saul and then David's Kingship. The first 7 chapters focus on Samuel

and the transition out of Judges. Chapter 8 introduces a new era of kingship. But, things don't go well and in chapters 9-15 Saul is rejected. This leads to a time of transition into the reign of David until the end of the book. We can diagram it like this¹:



Here's where we will stop along the way in 1 Samuel:

1 Samuel	Samuel's Leadership	Focus
Ch 1-2	Our God Listens	Leaving the time of Judges, Hannah's prayer and dependance on God.
Ch 3	Hearing God's Voice	The Word of God, hearing and responding.
Ch 5	When Your Idol Needs a Hand	God's power, glory, ark and the horror of idolatry.
Ch 8	How To Be Like Everyone Else	Human sin and a rejection of God.
1 Samuel	Saul's Kingship	Focus
Ch 9-10	Nothing Is Mundane	Kingship, mundane decisions in God's plans, "Who will save us?"
Ch 15	Rejecting God	Sin, motivations, judgment.
1 Samuel	David's Kingship	Focus
Ch 16	A Heart After God	Humility, What God looks for, developing character.
Ch 17	Small King, Big Giant	Trusting God, threats and seeing things the way God does.

¹ Diagram adapted from Andrew Reid, *Teaching 1 Samuel*.

Reading Plan

1 Samuel is an exciting story, filled with humour, suspense, drama, action, and shock. To help us make the most of our time, it would be ideal to read the chapters we will look at during the week before meeting in your Community Groups.

Here's an 8-week reading plan, covering 5-days a week:

Week 1: 1 Samuel 1-2

1. 1 Samuel 1:1-11 – Hannah's anguish and prayer
2. 1 Samuel 1:12-28 – God answers, and Samuel is given
3. 1 Samuel 2:1-11 – Hannah's song of praise
4. 1 Samuel 2:12-26 – Corruption in Eli's household
5. 1 Samuel 2:27-36 – God's judgment on Eli's family

Week 2: 1 Samuel 3

1. 1 Samuel 3:1-10 – God calls Samuel
2. 1 Samuel 3:11-21 – God speaks and Samuel listens
3. Psalm 19:7-14 – God's Word is powerful
4. John 10:1-18 – Hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd
5. Hebrews 1:1-3 – Jesus is the clearest revelation of God

Week 3: 1 Samuel 4–5

1. 1 Samuel 4:1–11 – The ark is captured
2. 1 Samuel 4:12–22 – The tragic news reaches Eli
3. 1 Samuel 5:1–5 – Dagon falls before the ark
4. 1 Samuel 5:6–12 – God strikes the Philistines
5. Psalm 115 – Idols vs. the living God

Week 4: 1 Samuel 8

1. 1 Samuel 8:1–9 – Israel's request for a king
2. 1 Samuel 8:10–18 – Warning about kingship
3. 1 Samuel 8:19–22 – Israel insists
4. Deuteronomy 17:14–20 – God's design for kings
5. Hosea 13:4–11 – Rejecting God as king

Week 5: 1 Samuel 9–10

1. 1 Samuel 9:1–14 – Saul seeks donkeys
2. 1 Samuel 9:15–27 – Saul meets Samuel
3. 1 Samuel 10:1–16 – Saul is anointed
4. 1 Samuel 10:17–24 – Saul is chosen publicly
5. 1 Samuel 10:25–27 – Early responses to Saul

Week 6: 1 Samuel 15

1. 1 Samuel 15:1–9 – Saul’s incomplete obedience
2. 1 Samuel 15:10–23 – God’s verdict and Samuel’s rebuke
3. 1 Samuel 15:24–31 – Saul’s confession and rejection
4. 1 Samuel 15:32–35 – The matter is finished
5. Hebrews 4:12–16 – God’s Word exposes and heals

Week 7: 1 Samuel 16

1. 1 Samuel 16:1–5 – Samuel is sent to Jesse’s house
2. 1 Samuel 16:6–13 – David is chosen and anointed
3. 1 Samuel 16:14–23 – David serves Saul
4. Psalm 78:70–72 – God’s view of David
5. Acts 13:21–23 – David in God’s salvation plan

Week 8: 1 Samuel 17

1. 1 Samuel 17:1–11 – Goliath’s challenge
2. 1 Samuel 17:12–30 – David arrives and hears
3. 1 Samuel 17:31–40 – David volunteers
4. 1 Samuel 17:41–54 – The battle and victory
5. 1 Samuel 17:55–58 – Saul’s reaction & reflection

Study 1

1 Samuel 1-2

Opening

Nearly all of us have at some time lived with situations where we feel as though life is out of control or out of the reach of God. Share some examples with one another. How have you felt about God at these times? How have you reacted to Him?

Study

Read the chapters out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. What do you learn of the four main characters (Hannah, Eli, Peninnah and Elkanah) in these chapters?
- b. List the words and references that describe the inner emotional state of Hannah and its outward expression in **1:1-20**. Who or what has caused her to be in that state?
- c. How does Hannah's prayer in **Ch 2** link with her experience of **Ch 1**?
 - a. What do you think is the main point of this prayer? What does it tell us about God, the world, ourselves, and God's way of working in His world?
 - b. The word 'anointed' in **2:10** is the Hebrew word for 'Messiah'. Why do you think that Hannah concludes with this statement about kingship and, given Hannah's own situation and reliance on God, what does this tell us about

any future king's attitude towards God?? Yes, there was no king yet, but given how things were at the end of Judges (**Judges 21:25**) and the promise since Abraham (**Genesis 17:6**) it's not too surprising that kingship was on her mind.

Think

- a. Where else in Scripture do we find people acting toward God in the same way as Hannah? How does God respond? What do we learn about God from this?
- b. Read **Luke 1:46-55**. What echoes of Hannah's prayer do you see here? What does this mean for how we pray and what we expect of God?

Study 2

1 Samuel 3

Opening

List all the things you think are necessary for a healthy life – focusing on both the spiritual and physical. What place does God’s Word have in this? Can we hear God speak today with clarity and confidence?

Study

Read the chapter out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. How do **3:1-5** set the scene for the rest of the chapter?

Describe the time period.

- a. If you jump back into chapter 2 for a moment, contrast the disobedience of Eli’s sons to Samuel (**2:22-26**).
- b. What are the repeated words and phrases in this chapter?
- c. Where does the knowledge of God come from?
- d. How does God reveal Himself (**3:21**)? How can we know God and how does God lead His people?
- e. What changes from the start to the end of the chapter?

Think

- a. Because of Jesus, the world is no longer in a state of famine for the Word of God. Look up **Hebrews 1:1-3**. Do believers ever feel like they are in a dry period or in a famine spiritually? What could you say in response?

- b. Read **Deuteronomy 8:3** and **Psalm 119:105**. How are we to live? What does this mean for your daily rhythms of life?

Study 3

1 Samuel 5 (and, for context, 1 Samuel 4:12-21).

Opening

Chapters **4-7** all focus on the ark of God. The ark was a beautifully decorated chest covered with gold and it contained the tablets of the law that Moses received on Mount Sinai and symbolised the presence of God among his people.

When you think about idolatry, what comes to mind? Do you imagine little statues in huts and temples from another culture? Or, do you think more close to home – family, work, things, stuff, experiences and ourselves? Idolatry is taking a good thing and turning it into a God thing, which is a bad thing. How are we prone to idolatry in Australia? As we enter the world of **1 Samuel 5**, we will look at God's power over idols and the great victory he gives us through the cross of Jesus.

Study

Read the chapters out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. How does the narrative begin in **Ch 4**? Is this good or bad news and what is the response? If you were living in this period, what would this all mean?
- b. In **Ch 5**, where does the ark end up? What do you think the Philistines are saying by putting the ark in the temple of Dagon?

- c. What do you notice about the Lord's hands in contrast to Dagon's hands? Who is most active and powerful?
- d. How do the Philistines end up treating the ark? What is the picture of God that comes out in this chapter?
- e. Read **Isaiah 44:9–17**, noticing the references to hands or the actions of hands. What is the difference between a real God and an idol?

Think

- a. Where was God's greatest defeat of evil? Read **Colossians 2:15**.
- b. Read **1 John 5:20–21**. What might it look like for you to keep yourself from idols?

Study 4

1 Samuel 8 (Read also Deuteronomy 17:14-20 for a super important piece of context, too).

Opening

In the early 2000s there was a debate around whether Australia would become a republic. Regardless of what view you took (if you can remember it!), it was a significant time to think about being ruled by a different system of government. This is the sort of level of national change that God's people were contemplating in **1 Samuel 8**.

Study

Read the chapters out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. In Deuteronomy, what was to happen when the people wanted a king? How is this similar / dissimilar in **1 Samuel 8**? When Israel was under a king in Egypt, what was their experience like? What does God say it will be like with an Israelite king ruling over them?
- b. In what ways does the request for a king reflect the Israelites' relationship with God?
- c. **8:6-7** says that Samuel is displeased. What are some of the options as to what might cause this displeasure? What does God think is the reason for Samuel's displeasure?

- d. In **8:10-18**, is the king more of a giver or taker? What are the implications for the nation as a whole?
- e. Humans have a passion for self-rule, and despite God indicating clearly that He has the best interests of His people in mind, we reject His loving rule and care over us. So, how do the people respond in **8:19-22**?

Think

- a. Sometimes, God does indeed give us what we ask for - and it can be a terrible thing! But, it's also never the last word. Read **John 18:36** and **Philippians 2:9-11**. How is Jesus' kingly rule different from **1 Samuel 8**?
- b. In what specific areas of your life do you find yourself seeking control, perhaps even when you know God is calling you to rely on Him instead? Do you see an echo of **8:19** in yourself?

Study 5

1 Samuel 9-10

Opening

The concept and practice of kingship had been coming for a long time, and now we finally see how it happens. Using the narrative of **Ch 9**, we see how leadership, guidance, anointing, kingship, God's sovereignty, and human choices all work together in God's plans. Often in the Bible, complex doctrines are explained for us through the stories of people in the mundane and ordinary of life. This means reading **Ch 9-10** as one unit is going to guide us in our understanding.

Start with this question as a group: Have there been times in your own life when you have seen God's providence in the way quite ordinary things have come together?

Study

Read the chapters out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. What did you notice about the events happening? How did you feel as you read the passages?
- b. Read again **9:3; 6**, and **15-16**. In each section, whose quest is it? What is its goal? List its progress. What do you notice about God? How did God use them and what were they doing?
- c. In **9:16** and **10:1**, the Hebrew verb 'anoint' is the word that lies behind the Hebrew word for Messiah (and the Greek word

Christ). In other words, God is in the process of finding an anointed one, a Messiah, a Christ. Saul is the first of these. Given this, what do you think the main point of **Ch 9-10** is? What strikes you about how God brings this about?

- d. What do you notice about Saul's character across these chapters? Why do you think he was hiding and what else are we told about Saul in **Ch 10**?
- e. What is said of Saul in **10:24** and **10:27**? Is Saul God's choice? What clues does this tell us about his reign and future?

Think

- a. What does this teach us about the ways of God in the world?
- b. In **Mark 1:15**, Jesus declares that, "The kingdom of God has come near." How does this differ from the announcement of Saul as God's anointed king?
- c. Read those famous verses in **Romans 8:28-30**. What does this teach us about God's rule over us?

Study 6

1 Samuel 15

Opening

Can you think of a time you learned something the hard way? What happened, and what did you learn? **1 Samuel 15** shows us how God is looking for obedience more than appearance in his people.

Study

Read the chapter out loud and then work through the questions. On the Amalekites, you might want to look up **Exodus 17:8-16** to get familiar with why these events happen.

- a. How does Samuel respond to God's Word about Saul in **15:10-12**?
- b. What does **15:22-23** tell us about the way God must be served?
- c. There are four encounters between Saul and Samuel. How do they change between each encounter, and what do you learn about Saul?
 - i. **15:13-19**
 - ii. **15:20-23**
 - iii. **15:24-29**
 - iv. **15:30-33**

- d. In **15:32-35**, Saul had only partly obeyed. So Samuel stepped in. What does this tell us about wholehearted obedience over religious activity or sacrifice offered with divided motives?
- e. What does this brutal moment tell us about the nature of how we should view our own sin? How does this fit with the pattern of Saul we have seen?
- f. We began with three principal characters: God, Samuel, and Saul. Summarise how this chapter finishes for each of the three characters in **15:34-35**.

Think

- a. What does this teach us about spiritual maturity, hearing, doing God's Word, and sin? Think over the following:
 - i. Do you make excuses for sin, like Saul?
 - ii. Do you understand what your sin deserves, or minimise it like Saul?
- b. Read **Romans 3:25-26**. What does Jesus do for us?
- c. Read **Mark 12:33**. How does this shape our response to God?

Study 7

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Opening

Name two people who are heroes to you in public life and even in Christian circles. What is it about them that makes them so outstanding? What do you admire? How would you be like them?

Study

Read the chapter out loud and then work through the questions.

- a. What is God doing in this chapter? What is the big idea, and what does that tell us about God looking at the heart (**Jeremiah 17:9-10**)?
- b. What three things is Samuel told by God to do? What is his response? Why? How does God help Samuel in his fears?
- c. Like Saul, David was chosen for his potential, rather than for his current achievements or status. Read **1 Samuel 8:22** and note the differences between Saul and David.
- d. What sorts of things does Samuel appear to be looking for in an able leader of God's people? What sorts of things does God appear to be looking for? Who gets to choose the king?
- e. What characteristics of David are highlighted in **16:11-12**?
- f. Read **1 Samuel 15:28**. Do we yet have any indication as to what is 'better' about David from this chapter?

Think

- g. Martin Luther began his famous 95 Theses by saying, “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.” Read **Mark 7:21-23**. What does this tell us about our hearts and how should we be living as God’s people?
- h. Read **Philippians 2:5-11**. List the characteristics of Jesus, our Lord and King. How does He rule over His people?
- i. What do we learn about seeing things from God’s point of view in **1 Samuel 16**? How does that change how we view, admire or look up to others?

Study 8

1 Samuel 17

Opening

This chapter probably contains one of the last known Bible stories in our culture – David and Goliath. Given this, we need to work slowly and carefully to make sure we hear the text and not jump ahead and assume this is about conquering our giants (Hint: it's not! As David shows us, we need a true king to give us victory).

Study

Read the verses out loud and then work through the questions.

David has already been chosen by God (**16:12**) and anointed with the Spirit (**16:13**). But there hasn't been any sort of public affirmation in victory over their enemies. This is where **Ch 17** comes in. It is the king, anointed by God, who must lead his people to victory.

- a. In **17:1-3**, what is the context? What do you think this will lead to?
- b. In **17:11** and **17:16**, what time clue do you get? How do the people feel?
- c. Goliath is introduced in **17:4-11**. Did you notice the comments about defying or mocking in the passage? Jump around to **17:10, 25-26, 36, 45** and note which word is repeated. How is Goliath described and what does this think of God?

- d. David is then introduced in **17:12-24**. How he is described and how does this sit in contrast to Goliath? Think about the small / big language.
- e. **17:26** is key. What does David think of Goliath?
- f. Read **Leviticus 24:15-16**. How does David approach Goliath? How do David's words in **17:45-47** explain what he's doing? Do you think David has the same mind as God?

Think

- a. When Jesus came into the world, God's people also felt weak and weary, and the news of his arrival sparked joy (**Luke 2:10-14**). Jesus didn't fight with an army. Read **John 18:36** and **Colossians 1:13-14; 2:15** and note what Jesus thinks about why he came, who he's doing battle with and what he used.
- b. David was a shepherd of sheep and then God's people. Jesus is the greater shepherd king of God's people. Jesus cares about his people and did what we can't do, like David did for God's people in **1 Samuel 17** to save and rescue us. How do God's people respond to David's victory (**17:50-52**)? How should we respond to Jesus' victory?
- c. How do David and Goliath help us to see things from God's perspective and who should we hope in?
- d. What can we do when feeling weak and overwhelmed?

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