



Choose your king

1 SAMUEL

by Tim Chester

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The good book guide to 1 Samuel

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introduction: good book guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

why study 1 Samuel?

The book of 1 Samuel traces the history of God's people from a situation where they had no king and "everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21 v 25), via the rule of the king they want, to the beginning of the reign of the king they need.

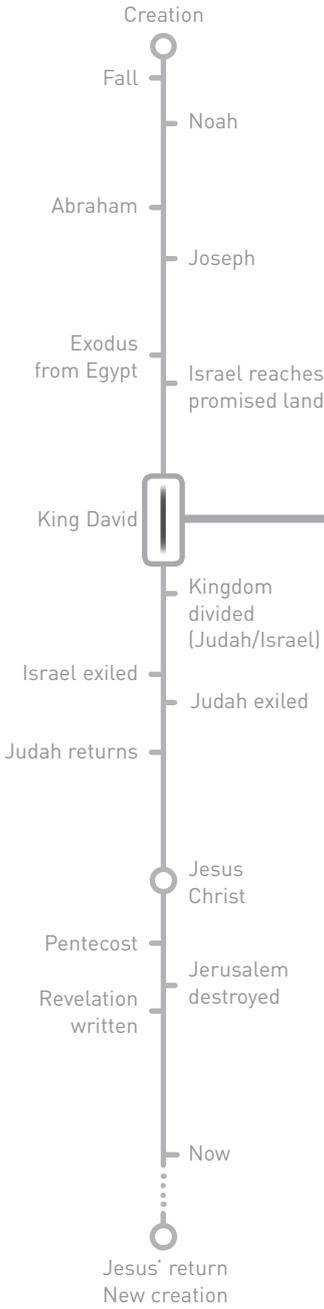
And so it is a book about choosing a king. The people demand a king like everyone else has, and God gives them the king they have chosen—Saul. It is a disaster. Then God chooses a king unlike any other, and gives him to the people—David.

And in David, we see the ruler that God's people need. Courageous, godly, thoughtful, generous, patient. David is all those things—yet we also see his flaws. So David points us away from himself and to the ultimate ruler, the King God has chosen to rule his people eternally—David's descendant, Jesus.

For us today, as for Israel then, the challenge is: *Choose your king*. We must decide who will be king over our lives; who will have our ultimate allegiance. And 1 Samuel tells us not to look at outward appearance, but to look at the heart—to choose a ruler who gives, instead of takes. The message of 1 Samuel is: *Choose King Jesus*.

These six studies will take you through this tumultuous period of Israel's history. You'll read of battles and murders, women praying in anguish and men plotting in envy, shepherds and giants. You'll see the rise and fall of King Saul, and the rise and struggles of King David.

But more than any of that, you'll see Jesus Christ. And seeing him in and through 1 Samuel will enable you to see him with fresh colour and texture, and understand afresh what it means to follow him today; to choose the King whom God appointed—the King that God knows we need—to be King of our lives.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of 1 Samuel fit into the whole story of God's word?

1 SAMUEL c1105 - 1010BC

- c1105BC - Samuel born
- 1050BC - Saul anointed as king
- 1040BC - David born
- 1025BC - David anointed as Saul's successor
- 1010BC - Saul dies

1

1 Samuel 1 – 3

A TIME OF CRISIS



talkabout

1. How do you respond to feeling upset?



investigate

Read 1 Samuel 1 v 1-20

2. How do verses 1-7 explain why Hannah is “weeping” and “downhearted” in verse 8?

Barrenness had added meaning in Old Testament Israel. God had promised that a child would be born who would save humanity; and Abraham had been promised that the child would come from his descendants, Israel (Genesis 3 v 15; Genesis 22 v 17-18). So infertility was a personal tragedy, as it is today, but it also carried a sense of exclusion from the purposes of God’s people.

3. How does Hannah respond to her “deep anguish” (v 10) in verses 9-18?

DICTIONARY

Sacrifice to the LORD (v 3): the God-given way for his people to stay in relationship with him. An animal died in the place of a sinner so they could be at one with God.

Priests (v 3): men who had the responsibility of offering sacrifices to God and teaching God’s law to the people.

The LORD’s house (v 9): the tabernacle; the place where God dwelled among his people.

Vow (v 11): a promise or commitment to God.

4. Why does Hannah become pregnant (v 19-20)?

➔ **apply**

5. What do these verses tell us about how we can and should respond when we are deeply upset about something in our lives?

- **Read Philippians 4 v 6-7.** How do we see Hannah living out this command in 1 Samuel 1?

⬇ **investigate**

▶ **Read 1 Samuel 1 v 21 – 2 v 11**

Just as she promised (1 v 11), Hannah gives her son Samuel back to the Lord, to work in his service (v 24-28, 2 v 11). Between these verses, she prays, or sings, to God.

6. What does her song in 2 v 1-10 tell us about who God is and how he acts?

DICTIONARY

Horn (v 1): a symbol of strength.

Exalts (v 7): lifts up (in praise).

Anointed (v 10): someone chosen or set apart for a certain role.

Ministered (v 11): performed the duties of a priest.



Hannah's song serves as the key to interpreting the story of 1 Samuel (and 2 Samuel). In these lines we hear all of the main themes of the book. The Lord humbles some and exalts others (v 7). It is not by strength that people prevail (v 9). God gives strength to his anointed king (v 10). And this last truth is remarkable, because at this point in the story there is no king in Israel! Hannah's prayer is saying: God's king is coming; and when he does, he will turn the world upside down.

➤ **Read 1 Samuel 2 v 12-36**

7. How are Eli's sons described (v 12)?

- What evidence does the writer give for this accusation (v 16-17)?

DICTIONARY

Contempt (v 17): total disrespect.

Ephod (v 18): the special tunic worn by a priest.

Mediate/intercede (v 25): speak up for someone else so that two enemies become friends.

My dwelling (v 29): the tabernacle.

Disdained (v 30): rejected.

- **Read Leviticus 7 v 31-32; 3 v 14-16.** How do these verses help us understand in what way Eli's sons' actions in 1 Samuel 2 v 13-16 were "treating the LORD's offering with contempt" (v 17)?



getting personal

The Bible tells us: "In view of God's mercy ... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12 v 1). The sacrifice that belongs to the God who has saved us is our whole lives.

Is there any way in which you are acting like Eli's sons, and keeping what belongs to God for your own use?

This week, how will you offer God more completely what he deserves from you?

8. What does Eli do about this, and how effective is it (v 22-25)?

9. What does God say will happen to the house of Eli (v 27-36)?



explore more

optional

▶ Read 1 Samuel 4 v 1, 10-18

How does God's promise of judgment on the house of Eli come true? What does this remind us of, about God's word?

In 2 v 29, God says that Eli has, along with his sons, fattened himself on the parts of the offerings that belonged to God, not to the priests. He has grown fat...

How might this contribute to the way he dies in 4 v 18?

Israel is in crisis. The priests were meant to point people to God, and offer sacrifices when people sinned against God. They were meant to “stand before the LORD to minister” (Deuteronomy 10 v 8). Instead, they are leading people away from God, and abusing the sacrificial system for their own ends. The proud, the arrogant and the full that Hannah sang about (1 Samuel 2 v 3-5) are found not among Israel's enemies, but among Israel's priests!

10. How do the descriptions of Samuel in chapter 2 give us some hope for Israel (v 11, 18, 21, 26)?



▶ Read 1 Samuel 3 v 1 – 4 v 1

This was a time when “the word of the LORD was rare” (v 1) and the people of God were in spiritual crisis.

11. What does God do about that in these verses?

DICTIONARY

Ark of God (3 v 3): box containing the Ten Commandments, kept at the heart of the tabernacle, which was intimately connected with God’s presence

Blasphemies (v 13): disrespectful untruths.

Atoned for (v 14): brought back into friendship with God.

Attested (v 20): proved to be.

Philistines (4 v 1): a people living along the coast to the south-west of Israel, who were often at war with the Israelites.

➔ apply

12. What does this tell us about what we most need when our lives, our church or our country is in crisis?

13. **Read Hebrews 1 v 1-2.** We have no Samuel today. But in what sense do we have a greater word-bringer than him?

🗣️ getting personal

If God’s word is rare today, it is not because God is silent. He has spoken, loud and clear. If God’s word is rare today, it is because people will not listen and Christians will not speak.

Are there any ways in which you are refusing to listen to God?
How and where will you speak God’s word in the coming week?





pray

Thank God:

- for prayer; that he hears and that he cares.
- for his word; that he speaks and that when he speaks, things change. Thank him most of all for revealing himself through his Son.

Ask God:

- to enable you to pray when you are feeling anguished or bitter.
- to entrust your greatest worries and disappointments to him and his sovereign purposes.
- to give you peace where you are feeling troubled. (If you are comfortable to, you could share prayer requests with the rest of the group.)

