



## 1 & 2 Samuel

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### Big Idea:

The story of a trustworthy king.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

In the book of Genesis, we see God make a promise to a man named Abram that he will make his name great and bless the entire world through his family. The story of the Exodus follows that family line as they are led by God out of Egypt into a land God promised them. By this time the family has grown huge and is split into many tribes, but God has promised to be their God and lead their community. Through this time, we see leaders called Judges arise to help with the problem of enemy tribes and social unrest.

The book of Samuel opens with the story of Hannah, one of two wives of Elkanah who is unable to have children. She meets a priest named Eli that tells her that God has heard her request and will give her a child.

**Read** 1 Samuel 2:1-10

**Question:** What stands out to you from this story?

Hannah dedicates her son Samuel to God, and he is raised by the priest Eli. Eventually God speaks to Samuel and has him deliver news to Eli that his sons will not continue his leadership due to their disobedience and many warnings.

At this point in the story of Samuel the scene changes to the Israelite Army who has just lost a battle with the Philistines. In desperation to win

the upcoming larger battle they send men to retrieve the Ark of Covenant so they can use it as a good luck charm in the upcoming fight. The Israelites lose the battle, and the Ark is captured and taken back as a spoil of war by the Philistine army.

**Read:** 1 Samuel 5:1-5

We in the modern world rarely have actual statues we worship and call a god, but if a “god” is what we give our devotion, attention and worship to then we have as many today as humans ever have.

### Question:

What did you notice in the story?

It is interesting that the Philistines fail to realize if you have to continually prop up a god through effort then it may not be a very good God.

### Question:

What are some things that modern people give a lot of attention to that they hope will make them happy? These do not necessarily have to be “bad things” most gods are good things that we have placed ultimate value in.

God continues to afflict the Philistine people, so they devise a plan to return the Ark to Israel. Once the Ark is returned and the people see the harm of treating God improperly, they ask this question in chapter 6 “Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?”

Samuel is a wise leader he challenges the people in chapter 7 to return to God. He knows sometimes people want the benefits of God without the obedience to God. We want the benefits of the relationship without the relationship itself. He challenges the people with this “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths (objections for worshipping the other gods) and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”

Samuel continues as the leader of the people until...

**Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9**

The chapter ends with this... “ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

**Question:**

What stands out to you in this section?

Samuel goes on to find and anoint the king that God shows him. It is a man named Saul. Saul's early career as king is full of promise, he is a strong leader and wins many of the battles. He starts off seemingly humble but quickly the story shows that Saul is taking credit for the Lord's blessing in his life. He believes that his success is due solely to his own talent and ability, he enjoys being the center of attention and seems to be blind to his own issues.

**Question:**

How can success fool us into developing unhealthy characteristics?

In chapter 15 we see Saul ignore clear instructions from God and is confronted by Samuel. Chapter 15 ends with Samuel asking Saul this: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”

At this point in the story Saul continues to rule but Samuel under God's prompting anoints a young boy named David to be the next king of the nation.

In chapter 17 we are introduced to the character of David as he offers to fight the Philistine champion who has been terrifying the Israelite army for days.

**Read Chapter 17:32-50**

**Question:**

Where does David's confidence seem to come from?

**Read 1 Samuel 18:5-9**

**Questions:**

Why is it often difficult to see others succeed?

Over the next several chapters Saul makes multiple attempts on David's life in fits of anger and jealousy. Each time David escapes.

**Read 1 Samuel 24:1-7**

Here David reveals his character again, he knows he is the future king, he was anointed, he has the backing of the people, he has the backing of his men. Yet he chooses to not violate God's commands in order to get God's promises. He is willing to wait on God's timing instead of taking obvious opportunities.

**Question:**

Remembering Hannah's song how do you see the relationship with Saul and David being an illustration of God humbling the exalting and exalting the humble?

The next several chapters switch back and forth between Saul and David showing the stark differences between the two in character.

Finally in chapter 31 Saul dies due to a battle.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> book opens with David lamenting the loss of Saul because he had been the leader the Lord had provided Israel. Over the next few chapters in the book the line of Saul falls and David becomes king over Israel. Again, many opportunities present themselves to David for him to hasten his rise to Kingship, but he never acts directly against the line of Saul.

Early in his reign David seeks to honor God by bringing the Ark from where it has been being kept up to his new capital city of Jerusalem. He has not consulted God on how this should be

done and through an accident someone trying to help is killed due to the holy presence of God. This sends David into a deep anger; he is trying to do something for God without first seeing what God actually wants done and it turns out badly.

Finally, David is able to bring the Ark into the city and we see that portion of the story here:

**Read:** 2 Samuel 6:12-19

**Questions:**

David is known as being a man after God's own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14) From what you have seen so far in the story of David what traits stand out to you?

David then wants to build a magnificent temple to house the Ark that symbolizes the presence of God. At first the prophet Nathan tells him to move forward with the plan, then after hearing from God in a dream Nathan tells him that God's plans are different. This time David listens for God's plans and even though it goes against his wishes he obeys by waiting. The end of chapter 7 concludes with a future promise.

“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. “

This promise of a future eternal kingdom will echo through the rest of the Old Testament.

For the next several chapters we see David succeeding and being a strong and gracious leader. In chapter 11 David has a huge moral failure and sleeps with another man's wife named Bathsheba and then conspires to have her husband killed to cover up the resulting pregnancy. The truth quickly comes out when David is confronted by Nathan the prophet.

**Read:** 2 Samuel 12:1-13

There are consequences to David's actions and at this point in the history we see some of the difficulties David has in dealing with his family and his past.

Later in the history one of David's sons then sleeps with his stepsister and is murdered by another son Absalom who is trying to defend his sister's honor. David has difficulty dealing with the situation and keeps his family at a distance. This causes a resentment to build in Absalom who then seeks to undermine David and start a rebellion. David retreats from the city to avoid direct conflict with Absalom but there is still fighting between the supporters of David and Absalom. Eventually Absalom is killed, and David returns to Jerusalem.

The book concludes with several stories that are out of chronological order, but they serve to make a point. The point is summarized in the song David sings in chapter 22. Through all of the trouble and success God has been faithful to His promises to the covenant promise that was made in chapter 7.

**Read:** 2 Samuel 22:17-25

David even after all his failures he leans into his innocence before God because he has not hidden. He celebrates what God does

**Questions:**

What are some takeaways you learn from the story of Samuel?

What is something you can do based on what you have learned?

