

St Andrew's

R O S E V I L L E

GROWING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

SAMUEL

LOOKING FOR A LEADER



Participant Booklet (Studies 1-10)
Term 3, 2022

Introduction

Welcome to 1 Samuel!

This term we will be studying the first seven chapters of this ancient historical narrative, as God's chosen nation of Israel transitions from the period of the judges to having a king 'like the nations'.

For hundreds of years, the nation had been lurching from crisis to crisis. The nation would sin and God delivered them over to their enemies. When they repented, God would raise up a judge to rescue them. The nation spiralled downward and immediately prior to the events of 1 Samuel, Israel was a very dark place indeed. The final verse of Judges tells us: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." (Jdg. 21:25 NIV)

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel tell the story of the nation's leadership. The three main characters are:

Samuel – the prophet, judge and king-maker

Saul – the people's choice for king

David – the king after God's own heart

Our studies this term on 1 Samuel 1-7 focus on Samuel as the leader whom God provides. The other significant figure in these chapters is God himself, particularly as he is represented by the ark of the covenant.

Reading Old Testament narrative can present some challenges for us as Christians. Because we live in the New Testament age, the details of Old Testament priests, sacrifices and the ark are foreign to us. Because we are reading narrative, it doesn't contain explicit commands or instructions for how we are to act.

However, the events of 1 Samuel form part of the big Bible story of how God rules, leads and rescues his people despite their sinfulness. It gives us models of faith to follow, such as Hannah and Samuel – and models of sin to avoid, such as Eli and his sons. Most of all, it is part of the story that brings us to Jesus as God's promised ruler who finally defeats sin and ushers in the kingdom.

Hannah's prophecy is that God "will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed." (1 Sam. 2:10 NIV). In 1 Samuel we see that the solution for everyone in Israel doing as they saw fit was not the leader that they wanted (like the other nations had), but one after God's own heart whom God would strengthen and anoint – the leader that they needed.

I pray that these studies will help us better understand God's plan and purpose for his leadership, so that we might better equipped to "Grow Disciples of Jesus Christ".

Mal York

Study 1 – Does God care?

Week starting 18th July

Pray

What is your most persistent prayer?

Read 1 Samuel 1

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

³Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD'S house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.

¹⁸ She said, "May your servant find favour in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

²¹ When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, ²² Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.”

²³ “Do what seems best to you,” her husband Elkanah told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

²⁴ After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. ²⁵ When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, ²⁶ and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” And he worshiped the LORD there.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 1:1-8.

2. What is the cause of Hannah's great sorrow?

3. How does this impact her relationships with those around her?

Read Exodus 23:25-26.

4. What does Hannah's infertility tell us about the state of the nation of Israel?

5. What response to God might you be tempted to have in Hannah's situation?

Focus on 1 Samuel 1:9-18

6. What does Hannah pray?

7. What is the significance of no razor being used on his head? (see Numbers 6:1-21, particularly verse 5)

8. What immediate impression do we get of the priest Eli?

9. Hannah is no longer downcast after praying (v 18). How does prayer help you when you are sorrowful or anxious about something?

Focus on 1 Samuel 1:19-28.

10. How does God answer Hannah's prayer?

11. What does Hannah do as a result of God's provision of a son?

12. Does this passage give us a guarantee that our prayers will be answered like Hannah's? Why/why not?

13. Hannah recognises that she has received a great gift from God, and acts accordingly. If you have a prayer answered marvellously like Hannah does – how should you react?

14. What does this passage show us about how God deals with the spiritual barren nation of Israel?

15. What should we do if we are feeling spiritually barren?

Application: *(What will you do more or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Spend time praying as a group for this and for individual prayer points.

Study 2 – The Knowledge of God

Week starting 25th July

Pray

When have you ever supported the underdog?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10

¹ Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. ² “There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ³ “Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. ⁴ “The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. ⁵ Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. ⁶ “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. ⁷ The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. “For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’S; on them he has set the world. ⁹ He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. “It is not by strength that one prevails; ¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

- 1. Are there any questions from the passage?**

- 2. What does Hannah's song teach us about the power of God?**

- 3. What does her song teach us about the power of humans?**

4. **How does Hannah anticipate God bringing about a 'great reversal'?**

5. **Mary the mother of Jesus says something very similar to Hannah upon hearing the news that she is pregnant. *Read Luke 1:46-55.***

What similarities are there between the songs of Hannah and Mary?

6. **How does Mary anticipate God bringing about a 'great reversal'?**

7. **What place do the rich and the powerful have in the kingdoms of the world?**

8. **How does Jesus bring about a 'great reversal' in his kingdom? (*see Matthew 19:13-30 for some examples*)**

9. **How should this 'great reversal' be expressed in our life together as a church? (*see 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 and James 2:1-7*)**

10. **Why is the last sentence of 1 Samuel 2:10 surprising?**

11. **What role will Hannah's son Samuel play in God establishing his king?**

12. How does this point forward to the coming of Jesus Christ?

13. Hearing Hannah's prayer of praise towards God, what are some things that you can be praising God for?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 3 – Corruption and Ineptitude

Week starting 1st August

Pray

Describe a leader who you have been happy to follow (eg sports captain, boss, ministry leader...)

Read 1 Samuel 2:11-26

¹¹Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.

¹² Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. ¹³ Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled ¹⁴ and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵ But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."

¹⁶ If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."

¹⁷ This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD'S sight, for they were treating the LORD'S offering with contempt.

¹⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home. ²¹ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

²² Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD'S people is not good. ²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD'S will to put them to death.

²⁶ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.

- 1. Are there any questions from the passage?**

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:11-17

- 2. How would you describe the attitude of Eli's sons towards God? How can you tell?**
- 3. Is this good enough for the leader of Israel?**
- 4. What was God's attitude towards Eli's sons?**
- 5. Have you heard of any of God's leaders who have failed in their ministry? If so, why is this so sad?**

Read Hebrews 10:26-27

- 6. What will happen to those leaders who continue to disobey God's word?**

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:18-21

- 7. How would you describe the attitude of Hannah and Samuel towards God? How can you tell?**
- 8. How do your "religious activities" reflect your attitude towards God?**

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:22-26

- 9. How adequate is Eli's rebuke of his sons?**
- 10. If we see a brother or sister in Christ sin in this way, how should we act?**

11. How does verse 25 reveal the need for the intercession of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:34)?

12. In this passage we see two types of leaders: Eli's sons and Samuel. What type of leader do we need for our churches and why?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 4 – God and Corruption

Week starting 8th August

Pray

Read 1 Samuel 2:27-36

²⁷ Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestor’s family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? ²⁸ I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestor’s family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites. ²⁹ Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?’

³⁰ “Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.’ But now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained. ³¹ The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age, ³² and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age. ³³ Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar I will spare only to destroy your sight and sap your strength, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

³⁴ “ ‘And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. ³⁵ I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always. ³⁶ Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread and plead, “Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.”

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:27-29

2. A man of God comes to speak to Eli about how he and his sons have fallen short. What did God call them to initially do and how would God look after them?

3. What did Eli and his sons do wrong here? (You may want to be reminded of what they did in last week's passage as well. (1 Samuel 2:12-15, 22)

4. If you were God, what would you do to Eli and his sons?

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:30-33

5. God judges Eli's family and family line. What are some of the punishment's they receive here?

6. What does this teach us about sin and God's punishment?

7. Is God too harsh here? What would be some arguments for this and against this?

Focus on 1 Samuel 2:34-36

8. In verse 35 God promises a leader with a different character. In what sense is this promise fulfilled in:

a. Samuel himself? (1 Sam 7:9)

b. the line of Zadok? (1 Kings 2:35, 4:2, 2 Chronicles 31:10)

c. Jesus, who combines the priestly and kingly offices? (Heb 2:17)

9. We all look for different things in our leaders – character, competence, convictions etc... What does God require from the leaders of his people?

10. After reading this passage, what are implications of bad leaders in God's church?

11. How can we safeguard our leaders and future leaders against this?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 5 – When God Speaks

Week starting 15th August

Pray

When have you had to be the bearer of bad news?

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1a

¹The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

So he went and lay down. ⁶ Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

¹⁵ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.” Samuel answered, “Here I am.”

¹⁷ “What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him

everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

¹⁹ The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. ^{4:1} And Samuel’s word came to all Israel.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Allow people to express what they think here. Write down questions people might have and if they can’t be answered in the group, then send them through to a member of the ministry team and we can help you with the answer.

Focus on 1 Samuel 3:1-14

- 1. What is the contrast in ages between Eli and Samuel (3:1-2)?**

- 2. What did it take for Samuel to “know the Lord” (3:7)?**

- 3. What was the message that God speaks to Samuel?**

- 4. God spoke directly to the prophets back in the Old Testament. In what way does God speak to us today? (See Hebrews 1:1-2)**

Focus on 1 Samuel 3:15-18

- 5. What hesitations would Samuel have in speaking God's message to Eli?**

- 6. What does Eli teach Samuel about his responsibility as a prophet of God?**

7. Why is it hard to speak about the good news of the gospel to people today?

8. What does Samuel's example teach us about our responsibility?

9. How do the following passages reinforce this truth?

John 15:18-21:

Galatians 1:6-10:

2 Timothy 4:2-4:

Revelation 10:8-11:

Focus on 1 Samuel 3:19-4:1a.

10. How has the situation in Israel changed from 3:1 to 4:1?

11. What can we do about the places in the world where the word of God is rare?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 6 – The problem of the power of God 1

Week starting 22nd August

Pray

What things do some people consider to be lucky/unlucky?

1 Samuel 1:4-11

¹ And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. ² The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. ³ When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the LORD bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD'S covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies."

⁴ So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵ When the ark of the LORD'S covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. ⁶ Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?"

When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, ⁷ the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!"

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 4:1-11.

- 2. Samuel is absent from the narrative from 4:1 until 7:3. What does his absence tell us about Israel's attitude towards the word of God?**

- 3. What expectations do the soldiers of Israel have of the ark of the covenant?**

- 4. What sort of things (even Christian things!) might we be tempted to treat in a superstitious way?**

- 5. How did the Israelites respond to the ark being brought into the camp?**

- 6. How did the Philistines respond to this?**

- 7. The ark of the covenant led the Israelites to victory over the city of Jericho in Joshua 6. Why did the presence of the ark succeed that time but not this time (see Joshua 6:2-4)?**

- 8. Two big outcomes of the battle:**
 - a. What is the significance of the Ark of God being captured?**

 - b. What is the significance of Hophni and Phinehas dying?**

- 9. Has there ever been a time when you have done things in the name of God, but on your own strength? What does this passage teach us about doing things this way?**

10. How then does a person live for God?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 7 – Where is the glory?

Week starting 29th August

Pray

1 Samuel 4:12-22

¹² That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dust on his head. ¹³ When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God. When the man entered the town and told what had happened, the whole town sent up a cry.

¹⁴ Eli heard the outcry and asked, “What is the meaning of this uproar?”

The man hurried over to Eli, ¹⁵ who was ninety-eight years old and whose eyes had failed so that he could not see. ¹⁶ He told Eli, “I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day.”

Eli asked, “What happened, my son?”

¹⁷ The man who brought the news replied, “Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”

¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and he was heavy. He had led Israel forty years.

¹⁹ His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labour and gave birth, but was overcome by her labour pains. ²⁰ As she was dying, the women attending her said, “Don’t despair; you have given birth to a son.” But she did not respond or pay any attention.

²¹ She named the boy Ichabod, saying, “The Glory has departed from Israel”—because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, “The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 4:12-.18

2. What was the response of the people in Shiloh when they heard about the ark of the Lord being captured?

- 3. Eli also heard the news – which was worse for him, the death of his sons or the capture of the ark of the Lord?**

- 4. Why is this worse news for Eli?**

- 5. How consumed are we with the glory of God? When God's name is dishonoured, do we care?**

Focus on 1 Samuel 4:19-22

- 6. Phinehas was also impacted by the news and went into labour – what does this show us about the extent of God's judgment on Eli's family?**

- 7. What is the significance of the son's name "Ichabod"?**

- 8. How are these events a fulfilment of God's warning to Eli in 2:30- 34 and 3:11-14?**

- 9. What does this teach us about God's words of judgment?**

- 10. When might we feel like God has been defeated in our lives or in our society?**

Read John 1:14 and Hebrews 1:3

- 11. Where does God pre-eminently display his glory?**

12. Why can we have confidence that God cannot and will not be defeated? What memory verses could we use to remind ourselves of this?

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 8 – The problem with the power of God 2

Week starting 5th September

Pray

When was the last time you saw an idol?

1 Samuel 5

¹ After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. ³ When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴ But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. ⁵ That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.

⁶ The LORD'S hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors. ⁷ When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god." ⁸ So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, "What shall we do with the ark of the god of Israel?"

They answered, "Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath." So they moved the ark of the God of Israel.

⁹ But after they had moved it, the LORD'S hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors. ¹⁰ So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

As the ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people." ¹¹ So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, "Send the ark of the god of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people." For death had filled the city with panic; God's hand was very heavy on it. ¹² Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 5:1-6

- 1. When the ark that represents the God of Israel and the statue that represents the pagan god Dagon come together – what happens?**
- 2. What does this indicate?**

Read Isaiah 44:8-22

- 3. How does the Isaiah passage mock idols?**
- 4. How does the use of humour help to take away any perceived power of idols?**

Read Philippians 2:9-11

- 5. Who will bow down (either willingly or unwillingly) before Christ on the final day?**
- 6. What do these verses teach us about the relationship between the God of Israel and other religions?**

Focus on 1 Samuel 5:7-12

- 7. What response do the Philistines have to the power of God?**
- 8. In what sense is it a right response?**
- 9. In what sense is it an inadequate response?**

10. How do people today try to ignore God or remove him from their lives?

11. Does God need the Israelites to do anything in order to bring judgement on the Philistines or in order to bring the ark home?

12. What does God need us to do in order for him to defeat his enemies? (Col 2:15)

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 9 – Knowing the power of God

Week starting 12th September

Pray

What's the biggest celebrity you've ever met? How did you feel?

Read 1 Samuel 6

¹ When the ark of the LORD had been in Philistine territory seven months, ² the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it back to its place.”

³ They answered, “If you return the ark of the god of Israel, do not send it back to him without a gift; by all means send a guilt offering to him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you.”

⁴ The Philistines asked, “What guilt offering should we send to him?”

They replied, “Five gold tumours and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers.⁵ Make models of the tumours and of the rats that are destroying the country, and give glory to Israel’s god. Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. ⁶ Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When Israel’s god dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?

⁷ “Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. ⁸ Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, ⁹ but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance.”

¹⁰ So they did this. They took two such cows and hitched them to the cart and penned up their calves. ¹¹ They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumours. ¹² Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

¹³ Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. ¹⁴ The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹⁵ The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. On that day the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made

sacrifices to the LORD. ¹⁶ The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron.

¹⁷ These are the gold tumours the Philistines sent as a guilt offering to the LORD—one each for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. ¹⁸ And the number of the gold rats was according to the number of Philistine towns belonging to the five rulers—the fortified towns with their country villages. The large rock on which the Levites set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

¹⁹ But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them. ²⁰ And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, “Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?”

²¹ Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to your town.”

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 6:1-12

2. What evidence do we have that the Philistines are treating the ark of the covenant with respect?

3. What evidence do we have that the Philistines are hedging their bets about keeping the ark?

Focus on 1 Samuel 6:13-21

4. How do the Levites demonstrate an appropriate response to the presence of the ark of the covenant (14-15)?

5. How do the seventy people demonstrate an inappropriate response to the presence of the ark of the covenant (19)?

6. **What does their demise teach us about the holiness of God (20)?**
7. **Does the holiness of God feature much in your thinking or speaking about him?**
8. **The ark of the covenant represents God's presence amongst his people. According to the following passages, where do we find God's presence among his people today?**

Matthew 18:20:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

Ephesians 2:19-22:

9. **Does the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ mean that we don't have to come before God with reverence?**

Hebrews 4:16

Hebrews 12:28-29:

1 Corinthians 11:27-34:

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 10 – Effective Leadership

Week starting 19th September

Pray

Have you ever KEPT a New Year's resolution?

1 Samuel 7

¹ So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They brought it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD. ² The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.

Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD. ³ So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." ⁴ So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

⁵ Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you." ⁶ When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah.

⁷ When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. ⁸ They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." ⁹ Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him.

¹⁰ While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. ¹¹ The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines. ¹⁴ The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighbouring territory from the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵ Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. ¹⁶ From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. ¹⁷ But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on 1 Samuel 7:1-4

2. How do the Israelites follow Samuel's instructions about returning to God?

3. What does this teach us about the God's demands of our worship?

4. What does 'true repentance' look like for the Israelites? In what sense is this more than just 'feeling sorry' for doing the wrong thing?

5. When might we be tempted to seek other sources of security alongside God?

6. What would 'true repentance' of this look like for us?

Read 1 Samuel 7:5-17

7. The pattern of the judges (eg Judges 3:7-11) is:

- Israel sins
- Israel are oppressed by their enemies
- Israel cry out to God for deliverance
- God raises up a judge to deliver Israel
- Israel is at peace for a time until the judge's death.

How does Samuel fit the pattern of the judges?

When Israel sinned and God raised him up to deliver them.

Read Acts 17:30-31.

- 8. How does Jesus fulfil the role of a 'judge' for his people?**

- 9. How does the resurrection of Jesus from the dead ensure that the cycle of Judges is broken?**

- 10. Often we focus on the negative results of Jesus returning to judge, particularly the condemnation to hell of unrepentant sinners. What are the positive results of Jesus returning to judge for his people?**

Application: *(What will you do more of or less of as a result of this passage?)*

Pray

Study 11 – Small Group Social / Dinner / Fun Activity

Week 26th September