



# First Samuel

## Welcome to the Book of 1 Samuel

1 Samuel is a dramatic turning point in the biblical story, marking Israel's shift from a loose tribal confederation to a contested, [God-directed] monarchy. The era of the judges—summed up by “everyone did what was right in his own eyes”—gives way to a new chapter where Israel demands a king. The tension runs through every chapter: what begins with a barren woman crying out to God ends with a shepherd boy anointed as the future king. Ultimately, their request exposes the fickleness nature of cultural appetite and further reveals God's covenant faithfulness.

My prayer for you is that you would be inspired to let Jesus sit uncontested on the throne of your heart. To that end, I am expectant for God to reveal His covenant faithfulness and that His goodness would draw you more deeply into relationship with Him, His people, and His great mission in the Earth.

## The Purpose of the Book

At its core, 1 Samuel exists to answer the question, “What kind of leadership does God desire?” The answer is that God wants humanity to submit to His leadership, but is willing to use human agents - and even world systems - to advance His purposes. To that end, the contrast between Saul and David is intentional and striking: Saul represents the people’s desire for a king who looks strong, while David represents God’s heart for a king who is actually surrendered to Him.

1 Samuel also reveals how God accomplishes His will on earth: We see Him working through unexpected individuals—Hannah, Samuel, David—to move His story forward. Even when human leaders fail, the narrative underscores that God’s purposes continue through His word and His sovereign guidance.

## The Writing Style

1 Samuel is a vivid and emotionally rich historical narrative. It reads like an ancient drama, full of tension, contrast, and deeply ‘human’ characters. The writer<sup>1</sup> paid careful attention to dialogue, motivation, and the inner lives of people like Saul and David, allowing readers to wrestle with their successes, failures, fears, and faith. The book also employs symbolism throughout: barren wombs, anointing oil, failed battles, and quiet prophetic moments all serve as images of deeper spiritual realities. The storytelling is both accessible and layered, inviting slow reflection and theological insight.

## Major Themes in 1 Samuel

**The Power of God’s Word** - The book opens with the statement that “the word of the LORD was rare,” highlighting Israel’s spiritual drought. But as God calls Samuel and begins speaking again, His word becomes the driving force of the entire narrative. Kings rise and fall based on their response to God’s commands, reminding readers that Scripture is not peripheral but central to God’s work in the world.

**God Works Through the Overlooked** - God consistently elevates those whom society overlooks. He begins the book with a barren woman whose faith reshapes the nation. He calls a young boy serving in a corrupt priesthood to be His voice. He anoints the youngest, least likely son of Jesse to be king. Throughout the book, God reveals that His kingdom advances through humility, not human prestige.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jewish tradition credits Samuel with primary authorship with the prophets Gad and Nathan continuing the account after Samuel’s death.

**Leadership That Honors God** - Saul and David provide a powerful study in contrasts. Saul is driven by insecurity, fear of people, and partial obedience. David, though imperfect, models dependence, courage, and a heart aligned with God. The book teaches that true leadership in God's kingdom has more to do with character and surrender than charisma or external strength.

**God's Sovereignty in Human Chaos** - Even when Israel's leaders make foolish decisions, God remains at work behind the scenes. He orchestrates encounters, removes kings, raises up new ones, and protects the one He has chosen. The book gives believers confidence that God is never absent—even in seasons of uncertainty.

**Foreshadowing of Christ** - David's rise in 1 Samuel sets the stage for the coming Messiah. In David we see the prototype of the Shepherd King—chosen, anointed, humble, victorious through faith rather than power. The story prepares readers to recognize Jesus as the true and greater Son of David, whose reign fulfills all that 1 Samuel anticipates.

## Key People to Know

Hannah models persistent faith and trust in God's timing. Eli illustrates the danger of spiritual negligence. Samuel serves as the bridge—the last Judge *and* a faithful prophet who guides Israel through transition. Saul stands as a warning of what happens when leaders prioritize appearance over obedience. David shines as the example of the one whose heart is aligned with God's. Understanding these figures helps readers engage the narrative more deeply.

## Why 1 Samuel Matters for Us

1 Samuel offers the church a profound invitation to examine leadership, obedience, and trust. It teaches believers to value God's voice over human strength, to expect God to work through the unlikely, and to trust His sovereignty in seasons of transition. The book ultimately points us to Jesus, the true King who fulfills the hopes and patterns set in motion long before Bethlehem.

## Let's Jump In...

This reading guide is designed to help you read through the book of 1 Samuel as we work through the sermon series. Doing this study on your own will help fill in the gaps in the story and give you deeper insights into the content of the sermons. Each day has a primary reading from 1 Samuel, additional passages and cross references on the same theme, and a prompt for reflection. Please don't let the prompt limit your reflections, but instead let them provoke further reflection and study.

## **Day 1 – A God Who Remembers the Forgotten**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 1

**Cross References:** Luke 1:5-25; Psalm 34:17-18

**Reflection Question:** Where in your life do you most identify with Hannah's longing, and how might God be inviting you to trust Him there?

## **Day 2 – God Speaks to the Willing Heart**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 2

**Cross References:** Psalm 75; Luke 1:46-55

**Reflection Question:** Hannah praises God for overturning the proud and lifting the humble— what kinds of wrestle does this stir in your heart, and how could it influence your prayers?

## **Day 3 – Hearing the Voice of God**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 3

**Cross References:** John 10:1-4; Hebrews 3:7-8

**Reflection Question:** What practices help you stay attentive to God's voice? Is there anything God has invited you into, or told you to do where you are dragging your feet?

## **Day 4 – When Glory Departs**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 4

**Cross References:** Revelation 2:1-5; Psalm 78:56-64

**Reflection Question:** Is there any area where you are relying on religious symbols instead of the presence of God?

## **Day 5 – God vs. Idols**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 5-6

**Cross References:** Isaiah 46:5-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9

**Reflection Question:** What "small-g gods" compete with God's rule in your life?

## **Day 6 – Returning to the Lord**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 7

**Cross References:** James 4:7-10; Joel 2:12-13

**Reflection Question:** What step of repentance or renewal might God be prompting you to take this week?

## **Day 7 – The Desire for a King**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 8

**Cross References:** Hosea 13:9-11; Romans 1:21-25

**Reflection Question:** Are there any places where you would rather trust in human solutions more than in God and His ways?

## **Day 8 – God’s Surprising Choice**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 9-10

**Cross References:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Judges 6:11-16

**Reflection Question:** Who are some unexpected people God has used to help you know, trust and follow Jesus? How has God used unexpected or ordinary parts of your life for His purposes?

## **Day 9 – The Rise of Saul**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 11-12

**Cross References:** Joshua 24; Acts 14:15-17

**Reflection Question:** What does Samuel’s farewell address teach you about faithful leadership?

## **Day 10 – Disobedience and Its Cost**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 13

**Cross References:** John 14:15; Proverbs 21:3

**Reflection Question:** Where might impatience be tempting you to walk ahead of God?

## **Day 11 – Rash Vows & Unintended Consequences**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 14

**Cross References:** Matthew 5:33-37; James 1:19-20

**Reflection Question:** How do your words shape the spiritual climate around you?

## **Day 12 – Rejected Leadership**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 15

**Cross References:** Hosea 6:6; Matthew 7:21-23

**Reflection Question:** Are there areas where partial obedience is masquerading as faithfulness?

## **Day 13 – Hidden in Plain Sight**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 16

**Cross References:** Psalm 78:70-72; Acts 13:22

**Reflection Question:** What part of your heart is God trying to form right now?

## **Day 14 – Facing the Giants**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 17

**Cross References:** Psalm 144:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-18

**Reflection Question:** What Giants have intimidated you into passivity? What would it look like for Jesus to destroy your Goliath's?

## **Day 15 – Friendship, Jealousy & Spiritual Attack**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 18-19

**Cross References:** Proverbs 17:17; John 15:12-15

**Reflection Question:** How can you cultivate faithful friendships like Jonathan and David?

## **Day 16 – Strength in the Wilderness**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 20-21

**Cross References:** Psalm 57; Matthew 12:1-8

**Reflection Question:** How has God met you in seasons that felt like "wilderness"?

## **Day 17 – Mercy Toward Your Enemy**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 22-24

**Cross References:** Romans 12:17-21; Matthew 5:43-48

**Reflection Question:** Where might God be calling you to respond with mercy instead of retaliation?

## **Day 18 – Discernment and Restraint**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 25

**Cross References:** James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1

**Reflection Question:** What situation right now requires you to slow down and seek God's wisdom before acting?

## **Day 19 – Seeking God’s Direction**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 26-28

**Cross References:** Psalm 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-18

**Reflection Question:** What decision in your life needs clearer spiritual discernment?

## **Day 20 – Recovering What Was Lost**

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 29-30

**Cross References:** Joel 2:25-27; John 10:10

**Reflection Question:** What is God wanting to restore or strengthen in your life right now?

## **Day 21 – The Tragic End of Saul**

**Theme:** The Cost of Unrepentance

**Primary Text:** 1 Samuel 31

**Cross References:** 1 Chronicles 10; Galatians 6:7-8

**Reflection Question:** What does Saul’s end teach you about the long-term consequences of your spiritual choices?