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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 09 OF 66

שְׁמוּאֵל א׳

1 SAMUEL

Shemuel — “heard of God” • An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

The LORD Who Hears and Speaks — 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21

Scripture Scope: 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

1 Samuel — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

Week 1: The LORD Who Hears and Speaks (1 Samuel 1:1–3:21)

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- **The title:** The book is named for Samuel, the last judge and the prophet who anointed Israel's first two kings. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel were one book; the Greek translation divided it.
- **The setting:** From the end of the judges period to the death of Saul, roughly 1100 to 1010 BC. Israel is a loose family of tribes under pressure from the Philistines.
- **The main characters:** Hannah, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, David, Abigail, and the Philistines.
- **Its place in the Bible:** 1 Samuel bridges the judges and the kings. It answers the refrain of Judges, that there was no king in Israel, with two kings: Saul, the people's choice, and David, the LORD's choice. In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings).
- **The structure (three parts):**
  - Samuel and the end of the judges (chapters 1–7).
  - Saul's rise and rejection (chapters 8–15).
  - David's rise and Saul's decline (chapters 16–31).
- **Why it matters:** 1 Samuel shows the LORD who raises the humble and brings down the proud, who values obedience over ritual, and who looks on the heart. It traces the LORD's anointed from Hannah's song to David, and it points to Jesus, the Messiah, the King who does not fail.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of 1 Samuel invites you to walk through the story of Israel's first kings together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of 1 Samuel and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. 1 Samuel includes battles and several violent scenes. The study retells those scenes briefly in its own words rather than printing or reading them in full, so the group can understand what happened without dwelling on graphic detail.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through 1 Samuel:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week 1 Samuel Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**The LORD Who Hears and Speaks** (1:1–3:21)	Hannah's Prayer and Song (1:1–2:11) / Eli's Sons and Samuel's Call (2:12–3:21)	The LORD who reverses fortunes; the Word who speaks
2	**The Glory Departs and Returns** (4:1–8:22)	The Ark Captured and Returned (4:1–7:1) / Ebenezer and the Demand for a King (7:2–8:22)	God's glory dwelling with his people; the true King
3	**A King Like the Nations** (9:1–12:25)	Saul Chosen and Anointed (9:1–10:27) / Saul's Victory and Samuel's Farewell (11:1–12:25)	The LORD's faithfulness to an unfaithful people
4	**To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice** (13:1–15:35)	Saul's Impatience and Jonathan's Faith (13:1–14:52) / Saul Rejected (15:1–35)	Obedience from the heart; the perfectly obedient Son
5	**The LORD Looks on the Heart** (16:1–18:30)	David Anointed and Goliath Defeated (16:1–17:58) / Jonathan's Love and Saul's Jealousy (18:1–30)	The anointed shepherd-king; the champion who fights for us
6	**A Fugitive and a Friend** (19:1–22:23)	Escape and Covenant Friendship (19:1–20:42) / Nob, Gath, and Adullam (21:1–22:23)	The faithful friend; the rejected King who gathers the outcasts
7	**The LORD's Anointed** (23:1–26:25)	Pursued in the Wilderness and Saul Spared (23:1–24:22) / Abigail and Saul Spared Again (25:1–26:25)	Leaving vengeance to God; wisdom that makes peace
8	**The Fall of a King** (27:1–31:13)	David Among the Philistines and Saul at Endor (27:1–28:25) / Ziklag Recovered and Saul's Death (29:1–31:13)	Strength in the LORD in distress; the King who does not fall

How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

This **Leader Guide Edition** is built on a synchronized two-edition architecture so you never have to juggle two separate books during your small group or mini-church gathering:

1. 100% Word-for-Word Participant Text Included: Every section, Scripture reading prompt, verbatim ESV anchor verse callout, teaching narrative, table, and discussion or reflection prompt appears here **word-for-word identical** to what your group members see in their Participant Study Edition. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.

2. Interleaved `[LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY]` Blocks: Immediately following each section, you will find a dedicated leader block containing:

- **Pacing & Time Targets** calibrated for a 75–90 minute session. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. 1 Samuel weeks cover about 85–120 verses, so if time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives and the retellings rather than the discussion.
- **Hebrew Word Study & Ancient Near Eastern Research Quick-References** so you can explain terms naturally without lecturing, when they add something useful.
- **Question-by-Question Facilitation Probes** listed in question order, designed to move conversation past polite answers into honest reflection.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around** so you can gently redirect common rabbit trails back to the biblical text.
- **Additional Research Notes** appear when they add something useful.

3. Leader Flags: Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions, with guidance on handling them. 1 Samuel includes infertility, corrupt priests, battle deaths, the execution of a king, a massacre of priests, a medium, and a king's death by his own sword. The flags give a consistent approach: retell the scene briefly in your own words, never read graphic verses aloud, and make room for members who carry their own wounds.

4. Reading aloud: Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Passages marked "in brief" are retold by the leader rather than read.

5. Facilitating well: Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

Section	Focus	Time Target
Section 1.1	Opening: The LORD Who Hears and Speaks (1 Samuel 1:1–3:21) (1.1 Q1)	**10 mins**
Section 1.2	Historical & Literary Context: Shiloh in the Last Days of the Judges (1.2 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.3	Movement 1: Hannah's Prayer and Song (1 Samuel 1:1–2:11) (1.3 Q1–Q5)	**22 mins**
Section 1.4	Movement 2: Eli's Sons and Samuel's Call (1 Samuel 2:12–3:21) (1.4 Q1–Q5)	**20 mins**
Section 1.5	Canonical Horizon: The LORD Who Reverses Fortunes and the Word Who Speaks (1.5 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.6	Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3)	**9 mins**
Total	**Full Week 1 Group Session**	**75–90 mins**

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · 1 SAMUEL 1:1–3:21

Week 1: The LORD Who Hears and Speaks

Scripture Scope: 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21 (ESV) • Focal Passages: 1 Samuel 1:9–20; 1:24–2:10; 2:12–26; 3:1–21 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: The LORD Who Hears and Speaks (1 Samuel 1:1–3:21)

Passage **1 Samuel 1:1–3:21**

Opening

Israel still has no king. At Shiloh, where the tabernacle stands, the priests are corrupt and the word of the LORD is rare. In a family from the hill country of Ephraim, a woman named Hannah cannot have children, and her rival torments her year after year. She pours out her soul to the LORD, and he remembers her.

The son she asked for, Samuel, grows up in the house of the LORD, and one night, while the old priest's eyes are failing, the LORD calls the boy by name. The story of Israel's kings begins with a barren woman's prayer and a boy who learns to listen.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	1 Samuel 1:1–3:21 (Hannah, Samuel's birth, Eli's house, and Samuel's call)
Focal Passages	1 Samuel 1:9–20; 1:24–2:10; 2:12–26; 3:1–21
Literary & Structural Anchor	Hannah's song (2:1–10) states the book's theme of reversal: the LORD brings down the proud and raises the humble. The narrator alternates between Samuel's growth (2:11, 18, 21, 26; 3:19) and the sins of Eli's sons. Seeing and hearing run through the chapters: Eli's eyes grow dim, the word of the LORD is rare, and Samuel learns to hear. The verb "ask" (sha'al (שָׁאַל)) sounds like the name Saul and anticipates the king Israel will ask for.
Big Idea	The LORD hears the prayers of the humble, judges the proud, and speaks to those who listen.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Story:** Understand Hannah's prayer and song, the corruption of Eli's house, and the LORD's call to Samuel.
HEART	**Pour Out and Listen:** Bring our deepest sorrows honestly to the LORD and become people who listen to his word.
HANDS	**Respond to His Word:** Take one concrete step to pray honestly and to listen to God through Scripture.

Opening Frame: From Bethlehem to Shiloh

Ruth ended with a son born in Bethlehem and a family tree that reached all the way to David (Ruth 4:17, 22). Israel still has no king, and the age of the judges is ending in corruption. 1 Samuel begins with another woman longing for a son. Her name is Hannah, and the son she prays for will one day anoint David as king. The answer to Israel's need for a faithful king does not begin in a palace or on a battlefield. It begins with a prayer that almost no one heard, whispered at the door of the LORD's house. The question for this week: how does God begin to answer the cry for a faithful king, and what does it look like to pray, and to listen, when he seems silent? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Think of a time you felt truly listened to. What did the other person do that made you feel heard?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Welcome the group to 1 Samuel and give the three-part structure in one sentence. Mention gently that this week begins with infertility and rivalry in a home (see Leader Flag 1). Keep the icebreaker light.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: What did that person avoid doing? How did it change the conversation? What makes listening hard?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not spend the opening on the whole book's plot. Do not turn the icebreaker into a discussion of hearing God's voice; save that for 1.4 (see Leader Flag 4).
- **Additional Research Notes:** Judges 21:25 and Ruth 4:17–22 set up the book. Many scholars see 1–2 Samuel as part of the history running from Joshua to Kings; evangelical scholars generally hold that it draws on early, eyewitness sources from David's time.
- **Hebrew Word Study:** Shama' (שָׁמַע), "hear," "listen," in 3:9–10. The verb means both hearing and obeying (Deuteronomy 6:4). In this opening it names the week's big idea: Eli's sons will not listen, Samuel does, and the book will teach that to obey is better than sacrifice (15:22).

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: Shiloh in the Last Days of the Judges (1 Samuel 1:1–3:21)

Passage 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21

Entering the World of Shiloh

1. Historical Background

The events begin late in the judges period, about 1100 BC. The tabernacle stands at Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim, by now a more permanent sanctuary with doors and doorposts (1:9; 3:15). Eli is the priest and has judged Israel for many years.

2. Cultural Setting

Polygamy was practiced in the ancient Near East, often to secure heirs, and rivalry between wives was common (Genesis 16; 29–30). Barrenness brought deep shame and insecurity. Israel's law gave priests specific portions of the sacrifices and reserved the fat for the LORD (Leviticus 3:16; 7:28–36). Vows were regulated, including a husband's right to confirm a wife's vow (Numbers 30).

3. Literary Structure of 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21

- **Elkanah's family** (1:1–8)
- **Hannah's vow** (1:9–11)
- **Eli's misunderstanding** (1:12–18)
- **Samuel born and given** (1:19–28)
- **Hannah's song** (2:1–10)
- **Samuel serves** (2:11)
- **Worthless priests** (2:12–17)
- **Samuel grows** (2:18–21)
- **Eli's weak rebuke** (2:22–26)
- **A man of God's warning** (2:27–36)
- **The LORD calls Samuel** (3:1–10)
- **The message and the prophet** (3:11–21)

4. Key Themes

The LORD reverses fortunes; prayer from the heart; honoring the LORD; corrupt and faithful leaders; hearing and obeying God's word; the LORD's anointed.

5. Theological Considerations

Hannah's song speaks of the LORD's king and anointed before Israel has any king (2:10). The book's story of kingship begins with a prayer, not a palace.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Excavations at Shiloh show occupation in this period and destruction around the mid-eleventh century BC, which may relate to the events of chapter 4 (compare Jeremiah 7:12).

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: 1 Samuel begins in the same dark days as the end of Judges. Why might God begin the story of Israel's kings with a barren woman rather than a powerful leader?

1.2 Q2: The priests at Shiloh were supposed to lead Israel in worship, yet they were corrupt. How does corrupt leadership affect the faith of ordinary people?

1.2 Q3: The narrator keeps switching between Samuel growing up and Eli's sons growing worse. What is the narrator helping us see by setting them side by side?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Describe Shiloh in words: a sanctuary town in the hill country north of Jerusalem, where Israel went for the yearly sacrifice. Keep the background brief so the story has room.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: Whom does God often choose in Scripture? What does Hannah's weakness make room for? Where have you seen God work through someone overlooked?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: What were Eli's sons supposed to do? How might worshipers at Shiloh have felt? How can we pray for and support faithful leaders?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: What is rising and what is falling? How does this anticipate Hannah's song? Where is God quietly raising up something good in a dark time?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not name modern churches or leaders as examples of corruption. Do not overstate the archaeology of Shiloh as proof of a specific event.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Joshua 18:1 places the tabernacle at Shiloh. Deuteronomy 18:3 lists priests' portions. Jewish tradition (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 14b–15a) credits Samuel with writing the book, with Gad and Nathan completing it (compare 1 Chronicles 29:29).
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Vows to deities in exchange for children are known in ancient Near Eastern texts. Children were often weaned at two to three years, and a weaning feast marked the occasion (Genesis 21:8). Samuel's linen ephod was a simple priestly garment, distinct from the high priest's ornate ephod.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Sha'al (שָׁאַל), "ask," "lend," in 1:17, 20, and 27–28. In this context section it shows the wordplay with Saul's name (Sha'ul (שָׁאוּל), "asked for"): Hannah's asking is humble faith, while Israel's asking for a king in chapter 8 will be a rejection of God.
  - YHWH Tseva'ot (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), "the LORD of hosts," in 1:3 and 11. This is the first use of the title in the Bible. In this context section it shows that powerless Hannah prays to the God who commands all powers; the title returns when David faces Goliath (17:45).

Section 1.3

Movement 1: Hannah's Prayer and Song (1 Samuel 1:1–2:11)

Passage **1 Samuel 1:1–2:11**

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **1 Samuel 1**. Read aloud in this order:

- **Reader 1: 1 Samuel 1:1–8** (focal passage) — Elkanah has two wives; Peninnah has children and Hannah has none; each year at Shiloh, Peninnah provokes Hannah until she weeps and will not eat, and Elkanah asks whether he is not more to her than ten sons.
- **Reader 2: 1 Samuel 1:9–20** (focal passage) — Hannah prays in deep distress and vows to give a son to the LORD; Eli thinks she is drunk, then blesses her; the LORD remembers her, and she bears Samuel.
- **Reader 3: 1 Samuel 1:21–28** (focal passage) — After Samuel is weaned, Hannah brings him to Shiloh and gives him to the LORD for life.

- **Reader 4: 1 Samuel 2:1–11** (focal passage) — Hannah's song: there is none holy like the LORD; he humbles the proud and lifts the weak; he will give strength to his king; Samuel ministers before the LORD.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **1 Samuel 1:11:** And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."
>
> **1 Samuel 1:27–28:** For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.
>
> **1 Samuel 2:2:**
>
> "There is none holy like the LORD:
>
> for there is none besides you;
>
> there is no rock like our God.
>
> **1 Samuel 2:10:**
>
> The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
>
> against them he will thunder in heaven.
>
> The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
>
> he will give strength to his king
>
> and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Teaching Narrative: A Barren Woman's Prayer and Song

1. A Home with a Wound (1 Samuel 1:1–8)

Elkanah loves Hannah, but the home is full of grief. The LORD has closed her womb, and Peninnah's provocation turns the yearly worship into yearly pain.

2. Pouring Out Her Soul (1 Samuel 1:9–11)

Hannah takes her bitterness to the LORD of hosts. She asks him to look, remember, and not forget, and she vows to give her son back to him for life.

3. Misread and Blessed (1 Samuel 1:12–18)

Eli sees her lips moving and assumes she is drunk. Hannah explains that she is pouring out her soul. Eli blesses her, and she goes away no longer sad, before anything has changed.

4. The LORD Remembered Her (1 Samuel 1:19–20)

The God she asked to remember her does. Samuel is born, his name sounding like the word she prayed.

5. Asked and Given (1 Samuel 1:21–28)

Hannah keeps her vow. She brings the weaned boy to Shiloh and gives him to the LORD, the one she asked for now "lent" back.

6. The Song of Reversal (1 Samuel 2:1–10)

Hannah's joy becomes a song about the LORD: none is holy like him, there is no rock like him, he raises the poor from the dust, and he will give strength to his king and exalt his anointed. A private answer becomes a vision of God's kingdom.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: Hannah's yearly trip to worship became a yearly reminder of her pain. Where do people experience grief in places that are supposed to bring joy?

1.3 Q2: Hannah prayed, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me" (1:11). What does her prayer teach us about bringing honest sorrow to God?

1.3 Q3: Eli misjudged Hannah's prayer as drunkenness. How can we misread people who are in deep distress, and how can we respond better?

1.3 Q4: Hannah said, "For this child I prayed... Therefore I have lent him to the LORD" (1:27–28). What does it look like to hold God's gifts with open hands?

1.3 Q5: Hannah sang, "There is none holy like the LORD... there is no rock like our God" (2:2). How does her song move from her own story to God's character and his coming king (2:10)?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading, 7 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 5 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).

- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign four readers for 1:1–8, 1:9–20, 1:21–28, and 2:1–11. Hannah's song is poetry; consider having it read slowly by one strong reader. Give 1.3 Q2 room for honest answers.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: What made Shiloh painful for Hannah? Who in our church might feel that way at holidays or family events? How can we notice them?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: What three things does Hannah ask God to do? Why does she call him "LORD of hosts"? What would it look like for you to pray like that?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What did Eli assume? How did Hannah answer him? What helps us respond to people in pain with compassion?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What did it cost Hannah to keep her vow? What do you hold most tightly? How might God be asking you to hold it more loosely?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What does the song say about the proud and the humble? Who is the "anointed" when Israel has no king? Why might God give Hannah a song about the future?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: Infertility, rivalry, and polygamy (1:1–8)**
  - Hannah's barrenness and Peninnah's provocation may be painful for members living with infertility or family conflict. Avoid suggesting that prayer guarantees a child or that childlessness reflects God's displeasure. Note that the narrative records polygamy without approving it; its fruit here is grief.
- **LEADER FLAG 2: Hannah's vow and giving up her son (1:11, 24–28)**
  - Members may find it hard that Hannah gives her young child away. Explain the context of the vow, and that Samuel was raised at the sanctuary under the high priest's care, with Hannah visiting yearly (2:19). Avoid using this as a model for parents making vows about their children's futures, or as pressure on members to "give up" what they love.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not claim that "Samuel" literally means "asked of God"; the name probably means "name of God" or "heard by God," and the wordplay in 1:20 is based on sound. Do not assert that Hannah's song was composed later and inserted; that view exists but is not certain.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Genesis 16, 21, and 29–30 tell of Sarah, Hagar, Rachel, and Leah, whose stories Hannah's echoes. Numbers 6 describes the Nazirite vow, which Hannah's "no razor" promise resembles (compare Judges 13:5). Deuteronomy 32:4 calls the LORD the Rock.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** A husband could confirm or cancel a wife's vow (Numbers 30:10–15); Elkanah confirms Hannah's (1:23). Silent prayer was unusual in a world where prayers were normally spoken aloud, which may explain Eli's mistake.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Sha'al (שָׁאַל), "ask," in 1:17, 20, and 27–28 ("lent" in 1:28 is the same root). In this movement it shows Hannah asking the LORD for Samuel and then giving back what she asked.
  - Zakhar (זָכַר), "remember," in 1:11 and 19. When God remembers, he acts for his people (Genesis 8:1; 30:22). In this movement it shows Hannah's prayer answered in the very word she prayed.
  - YHWH Tseva'ot (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), "the LORD of hosts," in 1:11. In this movement it shows a powerless woman appealing to the commander of all powers.
  - Tsur (צוּר), "rock," in 2:2. "Rock" pictures God's strength and stability (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:2). In this movement it shows Hannah calling the LORD the solid ground for those with no other security.
  - Mashiach (מָשִׁיחַ), "anointed," in 2:10. It is the source of the word "Messiah," and this is its first use for a king. In this movement it shows Hannah singing of the LORD's anointed before Israel has a king, a theme that will dominate the book (16:13; 24:6).

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Eli's Sons and Samuel's Call (1 Samuel 2:12–3:21)

Passage **1 Samuel 2:12–3:21**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Leader summary of 1 Samuel 2:12–17** — Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are worthless men who do not know the LORD. They take the best of the sacrifices by force, before the LORD's portion is offered, and treat the LORD's offering with contempt.
- **Reader 1: 1 Samuel 2:18–21** (focal passage) — The boy Samuel serves in a linen ephod; Hannah brings him a little robe each year; the LORD gives Hannah three more sons and two daughters.
- **Leader summary of 1 Samuel 2:22–26** (then 2:26 read aloud) — Eli hears of his sons' sins, including sexual sin with the women who served at the tent, and rebukes them mildly; they do not listen. Meanwhile Samuel grows in favor with the LORD and with people.
- **Leader summary of 1 Samuel 2:27–36** — A man of God tells Eli that his house will lose the priesthood, that both sons will die on the same day, and that the LORD will raise up a faithful priest. The LORD says he honors those who honor him.
- **Reader 2: 1 Samuel 3:1–21** (focal passage) — The word of the LORD is rare; the LORD calls Samuel three times, and Samuel runs to Eli; Eli tells him how to answer, and Samuel says, Speak, for your servant hears; the LORD confirms judgment on Eli's house; Samuel grows, and all Israel knows he is a prophet.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **1 Samuel 3:10:** And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."
>
> **1 Samuel 3:19–20:** And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD.

Teaching Narrative: A Corrupt Priesthood and a Boy Who Listens

1. Priests Who Did Not Know the LORD (1 Samuel 2:12–17)

Hophni and Phinehas serve at the altar but treat worship as a way to take. Their sin is "very great" in the LORD's sight because it teaches people to despise the offering.

2. The Boy in the Linen Ephod (1 Samuel 2:18–21)

In the same sanctuary, Samuel quietly serves. Hannah's yearly robe is a picture of a mother's love, and the LORD gives her more children.

3. A Father Who Would Not Restrain (1 Samuel 2:22–26)

Eli rebukes his sons, but too mildly and too late. They will not listen. Samuel, by contrast, grows in favor with God and people.

4. Honor and Weight (1 Samuel 2:27–36)

The LORD charges Eli with honoring his sons above him. Those who honor the LORD he will honor; those who despise him will be lightly esteemed.

5. The LORD Calls (1 Samuel 3:1–10)

In a night when the word of the LORD is rare and Eli's eyes are dim, the LORD calls Samuel by name. Samuel does not yet know the LORD's voice. Eli, to his credit, teaches him how to answer.

6. A Hard First Message (1 Samuel 3:11–18)

Samuel's first word from the LORD is judgment on the man who raised him. Eli urges him to hide nothing, and accepts it.

7. The LORD Was with Him (1 Samuel 3:19–21)

The LORD lets none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. From Dan to Beersheba, all Israel knows he is a prophet, and the LORD again reveals himself at Shiloh.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: Eli's sons served at the altar but "did not know the LORD" (2:12). How is it possible to be close to religious things and still not know God?

1.4 Q2: Eli rebuked his sons but did not restrain them (3:13). What is the difference between disapproving of wrong and actually acting against it, especially for leaders?

1.4 Q3: The LORD said, "those who honor me I will honor" (2:30). What does it look like to honor God above the people we love most?

1.4 Q4: Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant hears" (3:10). What does it look like to approach God's word with that kind of readiness today?

1.4 Q5: Samuel's first message was hard news for Eli, and he was afraid to tell it. Why is it hard to speak or receive difficult truth, and how did Eli respond well in that moment?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 4 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).

- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Retell 2:12–17, 2:22–25, and 2:27–36 yourself. Have readers take 2:18–21, 2:26, and all of chapter 3; chapter 3 reads well with one narrator and two voices for the LORD and Samuel.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: What did Eli's sons do every day? What did they lack? How can we keep religious habits from replacing a real relationship with God?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: What did Eli say? What did he fail to do? Where are we tempted to disapprove of wrong without acting?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: How did Eli honor his sons above God? What would honoring God have required? Where do you feel that tension?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: Why did Samuel not recognize the LORD's voice at first? Who helped him? How does God speak to us now (Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:16–17)?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q5**: Why was Samuel afraid? What did Eli say (3:18)? How can we receive hard truth from God's word humbly?
- **LEADER FLAG 3: The sins of Eli's sons and Eli's failure (2:12–36)**
  - Mention the sexual sin of 2:22 in one sentence, without detail. Members who have been hurt by church leaders' abuse of power may be affected. Acknowledge that God takes the sins of spiritual leaders seriously. Avoid harsh judgment of parents whose adult children have strayed; Eli's fault was failing to restrain sons who served as priests (3:13), not simply having wayward children.
- **LEADER FLAG 4: Hearing God's voice today (3:1–10)**
  - Members may ask whether they should expect God to speak audibly, as with Samuel. Explain that Samuel's call was unique to his prophetic role, and that God now speaks fully through his Son and Scripture (Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). Avoid encouraging the group to seek or claim personal revelations, and avoid dismissing members' sense of God's leading.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not linger on the details of 2:22. Do not present Eli only as a villain; he blessed Hannah, taught Samuel to listen, and accepted the LORD's word.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Leviticus 3:16 and 7:28–36 show what Eli's sons violated. 1 Kings 2:27 records the fulfillment of the prophecy against Eli's house, and Zadok's line later serves (1 Kings 2:35). Luke 2:52 echoes 2:26.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** The tabernacle lamp burned from evening until morning (Exodus 27:20–21). The note that it had not yet gone out (3:3) places Samuel's call in the night, before dawn. Samuel apparently slept near the sanctuary to tend it.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Beliya'al (בְּלִיַּעַל), "worthless," in 2:12 (compare 1:16). In this movement it shows the irony of Eli's misjudgment: he feared Hannah was a worthless woman, but his own sons are worthless men.
  - Kavod (כָּבוֹד) and kaved (כָּבֵד), "honor" and "heavy," in 2:29–30. To honor someone is to give them weight. In this movement it shows that Eli gave his sons more weight than the LORD, a theme that continues when "heavy" Eli dies and his grandson is named Ichabod, "no glory" (4:18, 21).
  - Shama' (שָׁמַע), "hear," in 2:25 and 3:9–10. In this movement it shows the contrast at the center of the chapters: Eli's sons would not listen, and Samuel says, Speak, for your servant hears.

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The LORD Who Reverses Fortunes and the Word Who Speaks

Passage 1 Samuel 3:10

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Hannah's song of reversal and the LORD's call to Samuel point forward to Mary's song, to the God who lifts the humble, and to the Word who speaks in his Son. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Mary's Song (Luke 1:46–55)

Mary's song closely echoes Hannah's: the Mighty One brings down the mighty from their thrones, exalts the humble, and fills the hungry with good things.

2. The Anointed King Exalted (Philippians 2:8–11)

Hannah's anointed king points first to David and finally to Jesus the Messiah, whom God highly exalted after he humbled himself to death on a cross.

3. The Great Reversal in Jesus' Teaching (Matthew 20:16; Luke 14:11)

The last will be first, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

4. God Has Spoken by His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2)

In Samuel's day the word of the LORD was rare. God, who spoke through the prophets, has now spoken to us by his Son.

5. Growing in Favor (Luke 2:52)

Luke describes the boy Jesus in words that echo Samuel: he increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

6. The Faithful Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 7:23–28)

The faithful priest the LORD promised (2:35) points beyond Zadok to Christ, the merciful and faithful high priest who lives forever.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **1 Samuel 3:10:** And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Mary sang that God "has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (Luke 1:52). Why do you think Mary echoed Hannah's song when she was carrying Jesus?

1.5 Q2: Hebrews 1:1–2 says that God "has spoken to us by his Son." How does that change the way we listen for God compared with Samuel's day?

1.5 Q3: Eli's house failed as priests, but God promised a faithful priest. How is Jesus the faithful priest who never fails his people?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Teaching connections, 6 minutes; discussion, 6 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up Luke 1:46–55, Philippians 2:8–11, Hebrews 1:1–2, and Hebrews 7:23–28 ahead of time. Consider reading Hannah's song and Mary's song back to back.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: What do the two women have in common? What does each song say about God? What reversal do you long to see?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q2**: How did God speak to Samuel? How does he speak now? What would it look like to listen to Jesus through Scripture this week?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: How did Eli's sons fail the people? What does Hebrews 7:25 say Jesus does? How does that comfort you?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not present the reversal theme as a promise that every hardship will be reversed in this life. Do not set Scripture against members' experiences of God's leading (see Leader Flag 4).
- **Additional Research Notes:** Psalm 113:7–9 echoes Hannah's song of the LORD raising the poor and giving the barren a home. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5–6 repeat the principle that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	Hannah poured out her soul, the LORD remembered her, and she sang of his coming anointed king; Eli's sons despised the LORD, and Samuel learned to listen.
HEART	The LORD hears the prayers of the humble and speaks to those who listen; he raises the lowly and brings down the proud.
HANDS	Faith pours out its sorrow honestly, holds God's gifts with open hands, and answers, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: What sorrow or longing do you need to pour out honestly to the LORD this week, as Hannah did?

1.6 Q2: What is one practical way you could make more room to listen to God through his word this week?

1.6 Q3: How can this group pray for one another the way Eli eventually blessed Hannah, with understanding instead of judgment?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, the LORD remembered barren Hannah and gave her Samuel; she sang of the LORD who reverses fortunes and of his anointed king. Eli's sons despised the LORD, and the LORD called Samuel, who became a prophet to all Israel.

Transition: The judgment announced against Eli's house is about to fall, and Israel will try to use the ark of the covenant as a weapon.

Week 2 Overview — The Glory Departs and Returns (1 Samuel 4:1–8:22): Movement 1, The Ark Captured and Returned (4:1–7:1), covers Israel's defeat, the ark's capture, the deaths of Eli's family, the LORD's humbling of Dagon, and the ark's return. Movement 2, Ebenezer and the Demand for a King (7:2–8:22), covers Israel's repentance, the Ebenezer stone, and the people's demand for a king like the nations. The Canonical Horizon traces God's glory dwelling with his people and the true King.

Focal Readings to Preview

- 1 Samuel 4:1–11
- 1 Samuel 4:19–22
- 1 Samuel 5:1–5
- 1 Samuel 7:3–13
- 1 Samuel 8:1–22

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

> **Closing Group Prayer**
>
> LORD of hosts, there is none holy like you, and there is no rock like our God. We bring you the unanswered longings some of us carry: the empty arms, the childlessness, the conflict at home that wears us down year after year. Thank you that you hear and that you remember. Forgive us for the ways we honor others, or ourselves, above you. We pray for faithful leaders in your church, and for those who have been hurt by leaders who were not faithful; heal and restore them. Give us listening hearts, ready to say, "Speak, for your servant hears." Thank you for Jesus, your final Word to us and our faithful high priest. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Do not press anyone to name their longing aloud in 1.6 Q1. Offer to pray afterward with anyone who is carrying grief about children or family.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q1**: What keeps you from praying honestly? What did Hannah model? Who could pray with you?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q2**: When in your day could you listen? What passage could you start with? Who could you share it with?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q3**: How did Eli first respond to Hannah, and how did he respond after she explained? What helps us listen before we judge? How can we follow up this week?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not promise that God will answer every prayer as he answered Hannah's (see Leader Flag 1). Keep the concrete step specific and achievable.
- **Additional Research Notes:** In Week 2 the name Ichabod, "no glory" (4:21), continues the theme of weight and honor from 2:29–30. Deuteronomy 17:14–20 anticipated Israel's request for a king in chapter 8.