

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: Introducing Samuelⁱ Selected Verses

INTRODUCTION:

Happy New Year, Trinity! It is good to see you here this morning. If you are a guest with us, thanks for joining us on this Lord's Day. We would love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can help us connect with you by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me, and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

A New Year always presents an opportunity to start something new, or to refocus on a key priority. So, today, we are launching a new teaching series that I am calling, "Life Lessons." We are going to begin a study working our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. I believe there is much to learn in this study as this Old Testament book is as relevant today as it was when it was written. So, I hope that you will make attending each week a priority.

ILLUSTRATION: Transitions

You know, life is filled with transitions. We grow up and transition from children to adults. My daughter is 19 and will turn 20 in August. How is that even possible?! But she is facing a major transition from being a teenager to full-fledged adult. Transitions can be challenging. From being single to married is a transition. From no kids to having kids. From rearing kids to launching kids. And then from launching kids to having grandkids. You know, I can't wait for that. Well, I can wait, but what I means is that I'm really looking forward to grandkids. But all of life seems to be one transition to another.

Well, 1 Samuel is a book of transition. In fact, the whole bible is filled with transitions.ⁱⁱ 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, *"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [transitioned] into the same image [the image of Christ] from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from*

the Lord who is the Spirit." This is the transition in character. Then James 1 challenges us to not just be hearers of the Word but doers also. Transition in conduct. Peter tells us that we are foreigners, aliens. That our citizenship is in Heaven, but we find ourselves here on earth. We are transitioning in destiny. Paul describes the tension of transition when he says in Philippians 1:22-23, *"²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."* Transitions.

1 Samuel is no different. It describes for us how the Israelites transitioned from a theocracy to a monarchy.ⁱⁱⁱ God wanted to rule over His people, but the people desired an earthly king to rule over them. They desired to be like other nations in leadership. Samuel becomes very concerned about this and God is going to remind Samuel that the people are not rejecting Samuel, but God.

What we are going to see in our study through this book is that there are many life lessons learned. The major theological themes include God as king of our lives, the power of a covenant, true worship, sin and consequence, and hope.^{iv} While there are these theological themes, there are also many practical lessons. Lessons in hearing God speak, lessons in leadership, and lessons in the outcome of ignoring God's Word.

So, today will be different than typical in that I want to begin our study with an overview of 1 Samuel. I want to give us some background, view key events, and then look at some major takeaways for us today. That will serve as our outline this morning. So, we won't study a specific passage this morning. That will begin next week.

I also want to let you know about a resource that you will be able to download. By Tuesday of each week, our messages are posted on our website at trinitytx.org/sermons. And in addition to the audio, I also make my notes with footnotes available for download. But this week, in addition to those things, I will also make available a one-page outline of 1 Samuel. The outline comes from Chuck Swindoll and Insight for Living Ministries.^v I have found that helpful in my studies and I hope you will as well.

MESSAGE:

Let's begin by looking at...

1) The Background.

I want to invite you to turn in your bibles to the Table of Contents. How many sermons have you heard on the table of contents? Probably not many. But I think a discussion there will be very helpful to us in understanding 1 Samuel.

If you have ever wondered why the books of the Bible are arranged the way they are, it's done in a very intentional way. The books of the Bible are not in chronological order in most cases. They are instead grouped by types of literature. I want to encourage you to bracket each group and write in the margin the group they belong to.

For example. Genesis through Deuteronomy are known as the books of the Law. Joshua through Esther are historical books. Job through Song of Solomon is wisdom literature. And Isaiah through Malachi are prophets. Within the prophets are the major prophets and the minor prophets. That division is according to book length, not importance.

So, 1 Samuel is in the middle of the historical writings. Particularly, it is in what is known as the "duo books." These are books that have 2 parts to them. 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. These books cover a span of about 575 years.

Now, interesting trivia, I hope, for you. 1 & 2 Samuel was originally one book. It was later subdivided into what we have now. The first translation of Hebrew into Greek is known as the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles are the books of the Kingdoms. There's 1 Kingdoms, 2 Kingdoms, 3 Kingdoms, and 4 Kingdoms.^{vi} In our Bibles, the first two are 1 & 2 Samuel. Same text, just labeled differently.

There is also some debate as to who wrote 1 & 2 Samuel.^{vii} It is actually an anonymous book, there is no author identified like there is in New Testament writings. Jewish history attributes the writing to Samuel. Well, Samuel dies by chapter 25 of 1 Samuel. Most scholars believe that Samuel did write the first part, but the other parts were most likely written by Gad and Nathan.^{viii}

1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles covers a period of 575 years. 1 Samuel covers 115 of those years. And key characters we will be introduced to are Hannah, Samuel's mother, Eli, Saul and David.^{ix}

2 Samuel then covers the 40 years of King David's reign. 1 Kings covers 120 years talking about the reign of King Solomon to the end of the unified kingdom of Israel. At the end of 2 Kings, a civil war takes place and Israel divides into two kingdoms. The Northern tribes, 10 in total, form Israel and the Southern tribes, 2, form Judah. 2 Kings then goes from that point to where both kingdoms are taken as captives in Babylon.

1 and 2 Chronicles are basically a repetition of the Samuels and the Kings. It differs in that it talks about the release and the return of the Jews back to Jerusalem.

Now, the direct backdrop for 1 Samuel is the end of the book of Judges. The final verse of Judges, chapter 21, verse 25. *"²⁵In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* It was a hopeless state for the nation of Israel. But as we will see, hope returns with the leadership of Samuel.

That's the background of 1 Samuel. Now, let's look at ...

2) Key Events in the book.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel. Here's what I'd like to do. I want to hit the highlights by skimming some of the subtitles listed in the chapters. It's going to be rapid fire, so try to keep up with me. I won't be hitting every subtitle, but you'll be able to follow. In the messages in our series, we will dive deeper into these stories.

1 Samuel opens up with a great deal of hope. While there was no king and everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes at the end of Judges, Samuel is born. He was a miracle baby. Hannah, Samuel's mother, prayed for a son even though she was barren. God answered her prayer and the prayers of many faithful Jews in the giving of Samuel. He would bring hope to the nation as he was a godly man, full of integrity, and purity. Samuel served as the last judge of Israel.

Judges were not kings in the way in which they ruled. Judges heard from God and led the people. They were not over the people but rather among the people. They worked full-time jobs providing their own income. This worked great for the nation of Israel as God was effectively their king.

Right away, we see typology at play. The miraculous birth of Samuel and His character/integrity is a type of Christ's birth and His perfect life.

Now Eli, a priest, had sons that everyone was hopeful would lead well. They disappointed and The Lord God rejected Eli's household.

Then we have the calling of Samuel by God and Samuel's obedience to God. Once Samuel becomes judge, he leads in a way to reverse all that Eli's sons ruined. One of the ways he does that is by returning the Ark of God to its rightful place and respectful reverence. There is peace and trust and great leadership under Samuel.

Then, the people come to Samuel and demand a king like all the other nations. This was instead of being ruled by God Himself. And the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning, so God gave them a king. Saul was anointed Israel's first king, and this ended Samuel's ministry and we have in chapter 12 his farewell speech.

Saul was everything the people wanted in a king. Good looking, charismatic, and well spoken. But almost immediately, things begin to deteriorate under his leadership. While Saul looks the part, he has major character flaws. He's dishonest, lacks integrity, and makes compromises in dealing with God's Law that leads to a massive downfall. As a result, God rejects Saul and makes plans to replace him. This is where David is anointed king.

David, while not the main character in the second half of 1 Samuel, is the exact opposite of Saul. Not the one that the people would choose. Not the one with the credentials and the pedigree, but he was a man after God's heart. So, Samuel anoints David as the next king while Saul is still in office. David serves under Saul.

As you can imagine, this created a great deal of conflict. Saul, beginning his descent, felt threatened by David, especially after his great victory over Goliath. Saul felt jealous and sought to kill David. God surrounded David with great friends that protected him from Saul.

Multiple times, David had the opportunity to kill Saul but showed restraint and trusted in The Lord's timing. In fact, many of the Psalms that we read from David are penned during the time where he is fleeing Saul.

Samuel then dies and the conflict between Saul and David raged. Ultimately, Saul gets so low that he takes his own life.

We see the transition from the hopelessness of life prior to Samuel's leadership. Then we see the glory of allowing God to reign and rule. And yet another transition to life under the rule of an impatient, rash, disobedient, jealous leader. That all brought depression and despair. This is where 1 Samuel ends, and 2 Samuel begins.^x

We've discussed the background and some key events. Now, I want to turn to some...

3) Takeaways.

I believe there are many takeaways from the Book of 1 Samuel as we will see during our study. But I want to make mention of 3 takeaways from the overarching look at 1 Samuel. 3 things that we must pay attention to. First, ...

A) Pay Attention to Transitions.

I mentioned in the beginning of the message this morning that scholars view 1 Samuel as a book of transition. Transition from a theocracy to a monarchy. From being ruled by God Himself to being governed by a fallen earthly king.

Remember that 1 Samuel covers 115 years. I think it serves us well to acknowledge that the shift we are going to discover in our study didn't happen overnight. Instead, it was a slow fade that transitioned the Israelites. A series of little compromises leading to massive departures. So, when I say transitions, think compromises. Pay attention to compromises.

Why would we think that 2700 years of biblical history would not apply today? What was true for the Israelites in 1 Samuel is true for us today. I don't think our culture has left God entirely. At least not yet. But I do believe that we are seeing signs of compromises leading to massive departures. It is true of the Church, true of our workplaces, true of our leaders, and true of our own lives.

Here's a truth that I want you to hold onto. Character matters. Integrity matters. The people of God endured exile, slavery and oppression because they failed to notice transitions in character. They embraced the slide instead of correcting course.

I heard a pastor once say, “We live on borrowed time when we willfully disobey God. We set in motion some kind of consequence that either we or our offspring will suffer.”^{xi}

As a Student Minister I often taught students that every decision has a consequence. We often think of consequences being negative, but they can also be positive. I would tell students, “Good, healthy choices lead to good, healthy consequences. But poor, unhealthy choices lead to poor, unhealthy consequences.” And the difference between a good choice and a bad one is paying attention to little compromises.

Mom and Dad, the character of your children matter. Leader and supervisor, character in the workplace matters. If we learn anything from 1 Samuel, it is that character and integrity are the most important attributes of an individual. What are we doing to invest in the character development of the people around us? How are we developing our own character and integrity?

I want to be careful here to avoid works-based salvation. We don’t earn our way to Heaven, you understand. I’m saying that for those in Christ, the Holy Spirit should be working in our lives to convict us of the areas of little compromises and lead us in the way of holiness, character development.

We must pay attention to transitions. Secondly, ...

B) Pay Attention to God’s Voice.

In 1 Samuel, we will see the juxtaposition of two kinds of people. On one hand, there are those that ignore God’s voice and His truth. While on the other, those that pay attention to God’s voice. And what we are going to see in our study is that blessings await those that hear and respond to God’s voice. But destruction awaits those that do not.

As we study through 1 Samuel this year, I pray that we will learn to hear the voice of God. That we will not filter it through our own personal views and opinions. But that we learn to listen to the still small voice of God, weigh it against the infallible Word of God, and then place our faith in it by putting it into action.

What is vital to making this happen is becoming a people of prayer. I’m sure we would all echo the same desires. A desire to see hearts and lives changed. A

longing to see an awakening, a revival. I so want to see a move of God in our generation. I believe prayer is a key to that.

Consider what Paul encouraged the Ephesian believers with. Ephesians 3:20-21. ***²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*** It begs the question, “What are we asking God for? If He can do far more abundantly than what we ask. Do our prayer lives show we believe that to be true?”

And the reason that I think this is so important is that prayer positions us to hear God’s voice. When we speak to Almighty God, we ought to believe He is speaking to us. If we are asking God for big things, then shouldn’t we expect a response?

Truth be told, I so arrange my schedule that pausing to pray almost seems as though I’m losing ground on the tasks at hand. Anyone else? But to pay attention to God’s voice means that we must be a people willing to posture in prayer.

We must pay attention to transitions and to God’s voice. Thirdly, ...

C) Pay Attention to God’s Working.^{xii}

1 Samuel tells some of the most amazing stories you will find anywhere in the Bible. It’s like we can place ourselves in their sandals. In the story of Saul, we see a warning. His character flaws not only harmed himself but others as well. We learn the need to confront those areas of our lives and allow The Lord to work in them so that Saul’s story doesn’t become our story.

But on the other hand, David is an example of what it means to trust God completely. Think about David for just a moment. He had every reason to doubt God and take matters into his own hands. David could have easily thought that God had abandoned him. Wondering why he is having to flee for his life into the wilderness. Having been anointed the next king of Israel, observing the mess Saul was making, he could have sought to take the throne. But he didn’t. Why? He trusted God’s timing so much that while he had opportunity to kill Saul he didn’t. And while we read of the lowliness of his heart in the Psalms, we also learn of his trust in The Lord.

One commentator I read mentioned that David's story teaches us to trust God. That despite human evil and workings, God is working out His purposes.^{xiii} What has rung true time and time again is that God always opposes the proud, but He always gives grace to the humble.

We must believe that God is at work. Even when we can't see it. And that ought to bring us peace and comfort that no matter the chaos swirling around us, we can live with a sense of peace that in our godly living, God will grant us the grace to sustain whatever.

God is still sovereign, and He will bring about His plan regardless of our obedience to it. And what was true for Samuel, Saul, and David, is true for us. One's response to God affects the outcome of their life. If we are obedient to God, like Samuel and David, we will live lives of blessing. If we are disobedient, like Saul, ignoring God's voice and living according to own terms, we will face the consequences. That hasn't changed. Samuel told Saul, *"To obey is better than sacrifice."* (1 Sam. 15:22). That is still true today.^{xiv}

The truths contained in 1 Samuel are something that have proven themselves throughout the course of history. And in the words of the British Statesman, Winston Churchill, "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

CONCLUSION:

What is God speaking to you today? How is God working in your heart? Maybe He's revealing to you the fact that you are a sinner in need of salvation. The bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin means to miss the mark of God's perfection. We are all in that boat. And what we have earned because of our sin is death, eternal separation from God forever. But the good news is that God so loved you, even in your sin, that He gave His Son, Jesus, as a substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross at Calvary. And the Bible tells us that if you place your faith and trust in Jesus, He will forgive your sin and rescue you from eternal death and instead give you eternal life.

Have you trusted Jesus as Lord of your life? Have you been born again, as Scripture urges, unto a relationship with Jesus? If not, today is that day for you. You come and take us by the hand and just say three words, "I need Jesus."

That's it. We'd love to share with you how you can begin a relationship with Jesus.

Maybe you're here today and you are a believer, you have a relationship with Jesus. Are you hearing His voice in your life? Are you obedient to that voice? Maybe there's something that you've been praying for, or something that you are seeking God in, and you desire to hear God speak to you. I believe He is speaking. Would you allow us to join you in that prayer? Or maybe you want to just come during this time of response and make these steps your altar to God. We would invite you to respond to Jesus today. I'm going to pray, we will stand and sing, but let's respond to the voice of God today. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Chuck Swindoll, "1 Samuel: Nation in Transition," article published by Insight for Living Ministries, accessed online: <https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-historical-books/first-samuel/>; Skip Heitzig, "Expound: 1 Samuel 1-2:25," message taught at Calvary Church on Wednesday, May 12, 2021, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/series/314/sermon/4569/play>.

ⁱⁱ Examples taken from Chuck Swindoll's message, "God's Masterwork: 1 Samuel: Nation in Transition."

ⁱⁱⁱ Skip Heitzig.

^{iv} Themes taken from Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear's, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, pages 22-35.

^v Outline by Chuck Swindoll, published by Insight for Living Ministries, online access: <https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-historical-books/first-samuel/>.

^{vi} Skip Heitzig.

^{vii} Bergen, page 18-19

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Swindoll.

^x For a more detailed overview of 1 Samuel, check out the Bible Project. Access it online: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-samuel/>.

^{xi} Swindoll.

^{xii} Application for this point is mentioned in the Bible Project overview of 1 Samuel.

^{xiii} Bible Project overview of 1 Samuel.

^{xiv} This paragraph was adapted from Chuck Swindoll's application in the article published by Insight for Living.