

More than Skin Deep

The Quest for a Faithful King



1 Samuel

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
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An Introduction to 1 Samuel

**These studies are based on those written by Andrew Richardson, Clayfield Presbyterian Church and Phil Campbell, Mitchelton Presbyterian Church.*

The heart of the matter

Appearance is everything. At least that's how it often seems. You can be a multi-millionaire celebrity based on nothing more than your appearance. And whether it's our spouses, our movie stars or our politicians, we are often more interested in externals than what is in someone's heart. We can be quick to judge people on how they look and sound and miss what they're like on the inside.

According to the book of 1 Samuel however, God doesn't care about appearances. He looks into people's hearts. In 1 Samuel 16:7 God says **"... The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."**

A key theme of 1 Samuel is that God loves to turn false appearances upside down. He loves to show people up for what they really are. People who humbly trust him are rich and honoured, regardless of appearances. People who reject him are poor and lowly, regardless of appearances.

The Plot

1 Samuel gives us the history of God's people Israel as they move into a new phase. Before this God ruled Israel through Judges; rulers raised up at particular times to deliver the Israelites from particular crises (usually caused by their rebellion against God). In 1 Samuel Israel is moving away from this intermittent, temporary human leadership towards a permanent monarchy – a long lasting dynasty to be passed on from father to son.

The book opens with the birth of Samuel, the last 'judge' of Israel, but most of the content of the book is concerned with the developing Kingship. The problem that arises as the book progresses is how Israel can have a human king, and yet at the same time serve God as their King. On the one hand it is clearly possible for Israel to have the right kind of King. God prepared the way for Kings when he first gave Israel the law many years before (Deuteronomy 17:14-20) and in 1 Samuel, God is actively involved in giving Israel their Kings (1 Samuel 8:21-22; 9:15-16). But on the other hand there are some big problems with Israel having a king. When the Israelites actually get their King (Saul) he has a disastrous relationship with God, and after just a few years he is rejected by God and another king is chosen to succeed him.

The book of 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul and his sons, and David waiting in the wings ready to take over. From all the positive things we learn about David in 1 Samuel, we are left with a firm hope that he will be the King to lead the people in serving the Lord as their true King.

In 1 Samuel it is in the hiccups and false starts involved with the rise of a Godly King that we see God's concern to burst the bubble of false appearances and honour those who humbly trust.

The Big Picture

As with all parts of the Old Testament, understanding 1 Samuel as Christians means understanding how it contributes to the overall story of the Bible. Working out how a part of the Bible fits into the big picture is called Biblical Theology, and the key to Biblical Theology is to remember that the whole Bible ultimately focuses on Jesus Christ.

In the bigger picture of the Bible, the theme in 1 Samuel of destroying false appearances and honouring humble trust prepares us for the way God acts through the death of Jesus – an event that

appears foolish and unimportant, and can only be accepted by humble trust. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’”*

Further, the book of 1 Samuel introduces us to God’s plan to rule his people through his chosen King. This theme develops throughout the Old Testament with the hope that one day a Son of David will rescue and rule God’s people perfectly.

As we study 1 Samuel we can look forward to gaining a richer and deeper understanding of what it means for Jesus to be our King and how we should serve him. We can also look forward to being challenged about ways we get fixated with appearances and ignore the more important part of what is happening inside a person.

Hints for Reading 1 Samuel

Technically, 1 Samuel is 'historical narrative'. More simply, 1 Samuel is a true story – a story about real historical events. As with every part of the Bible, however, the narratives of 1 Samuel are not just written to entertain us or record history, they are written to teach, encourage and challenge us about God. There are a number of ways that narrative can communicate a message, and here are some of those techniques.

1. Characters

A key to narratives communicating is the characters. They may either be examples - teaching us something positive about God and what it means to be his people, or counter-examples - teaching us about God’s judgement and the wrong way to respond to God. To understand the characters ask questions like: How are they described, (especially any physical description) and why? What do they say? What do they think? Is their name significant? Are they contrasted or compared with another character in the narrative and what does this tell you about them?

2. Plot

Stories normally have a point of tension which gets more and more intense until the climax of the plot, when the tension is resolved. Ask yourself: what is the key tension/conflict in this story? What is the climactic event? How is the situation resolved? If it has not been made clear earlier, it is often in the resolution phase of the story that you find out what God thinks about the situation because the Bible always assumes that he is in control. One particular feature of Hebrew stories is a plot that gets repeated a number of times with small differences each time. For example in Genesis men repeatedly meet their future wives at a well, and husbands repeatedly pretend their wives are their sisters to avoid getting killed for having such a beautiful wife. To understand these plots you need to compare them to the similar plots that have come before and note the differences.

3. Direct statements

Sometimes the writer of a story will draw some direct lessons from the story for how it should apply to the readers. This is handy when it happens, but it is very rare in 1 Samuel. Sometimes at the end of a story the writer can use a character to summarise what has happened and draw lessons from it.

1 Samuel 1-3: Rags to riches... riches to rags

Whether it is money or fame or reputation, there are plenty of examples of great reversals. Can you think of any?

Observation

Move quite quickly through this section so that we are all familiar with the details – before taking on the ‘interpretation’ questions.

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-8

1. What important things do we learn about the following people as we are introduced to them?

Elkanah	Hannah	Penninah

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-20

2. What does Hannah pray?

3. Who is Eli? What does he think when he sees Hannah praying?

4. What happens when Hannah goes home?

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28

5. What does Hannah do with her son?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11

6. Use the Table below to summarise the main points in Hannah’s song

Verses	Summary
v1-2	
v3-8	
v9-10	

Interpretation

Now that we are all familiar with the details of the passage, talk about the following.

7. How would you describe Hannah’s situation at the beginning of the narrative? How does the information about Peninnah emphasise Hannah’s situation?

8. The fact we are told about Eli's faux pas with Hannah suggests it is important for us to notice. What do you think Eli's mistake tells us about him and/or the normal situation at God's temple in Shiloh?
9. In what ways is Hannah's situation reversed through the course of chapter 1? Who is responsible?
10. How does Hannah's song in Chapter 2 reflect on her experience in chapter 1?
11. What wider truths about God does Hannah's song draw from her experience?

Observation

Hannah enjoys a very happy reversal of fortune. Through God's kind intervention she goes from being a barren wife and family 'joke', to having a son in the service of the Lord. Meanwhile, in the second half of chapter two we see another reversal take place. Eli's evil sons are condemned for abusing their positions as priests. At the same time, interspersed with the judgement of Eli, we are told that young Samuel "continues to grow in stature and in favour with the Lord and with men". 1 Samuel 3 contains the climax of the reversal of Samuel and Eli's families.

Read 1 Samuel 3

12. What situation is brought to our attention in verse 1?
13. What message does Samuel receive?

(notice that it's Eli should already know this will happen... 1Sam 2:27ff perhaps the point is that Samuel is the one God will now use to bring God's word.)

14. What is brought to our attention in the last verse of chapter 3? (3:21-4:1)

Interpretation

15. How has the situation in Israel changed? (v1 cf v21)
16. How does Eli contrast with Samuel?

Application

17. Look carefully at Luke 1:46-55. What similarities do you notice between Mary's song (in Luke) and Hannah's song (in 1 Samuel)?

Like Hannah, Mary sees the unlikely birth of a child as symbolic of the way God works in this world - bringing down the proud, and exalting the humble. For Mary though, it is not just the fact of giving birth that exalts her (even Mary's pregnancy would have been humiliating because she was not married), but it is the identity of her Baby that exalts her. Mary's baby, Jesus, is the one who will once and for all bring down the proud and exalt the humble.

18. Can you joyfully echo the words of Mary and Hannah – about the rich and the poor and the hungry and the well-fed?

19. What things might make you feel you are too far away for God to reverse your situation?

20. What things might make you think your situation doesn't need reversing?

21. What makes it hard to trust that Jesus can totally turn your life around?

Prayer Points

Ask God to help us trust him in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Interpretation

Read I Samuel 4

1. What might you expect to happen when the ark is brought from Shiloh? What does happen?
2. Who else died that day?
3. Look carefully at the death of Eli and the reaction of Phinehas' wife (4:18-22). What is their greatest concern?
4. At face value the battle looks like a defeat for the God of Israel. Even though His ark was with Israel, they still lost! How does I Samuel 2:31-34 shape our perspective?

Read I Samuel 5:1-7:1

5. What do the events in the Philistine cities tell you about God?
6. Looking at the overall journey of the ark, would you like to have it visit your town?
Why do you think God causes destruction wherever the ark goes?

Read I Samuel 7:2-13

7. How do the Israelites respond when Samuel calls on them to repent? What evidence is there that they are genuine?
8. How does the battle at Mizpah compare with the earlier battle near Aphek?

Application

9. Both the Israelites and the Philistines make a fatal error in dealing with God. They think that they can 'put him in a box' – they think they can 'own' him by owning the ark. We no longer have an ark, but in what ways do people still try to manipulate God?
10. Look at Luke 4:1-13. How does the Devil tempt Jesus to manipulate God, and how does Jesus respond?

As the Israelites learn the hard way, God will not be manipulated. Even as Christians, we can tend to think that God will (for example) bless us more if we pray more, or if we give more to God somehow to bless us more. The “Prayer of Jabez” was a best-selling book that promoted these type of ideas. But God cannot be ‘owned’ like that. Even in the midst of their sin, God was merciful to the Israelites. He provided Samuel to call them to be genuine, to turn away from their sin and to offer sacrifices and pray for forgiveness. As Christians we have received even greater mercy than the Israelites. God has given us his own son Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life, for us. He resisted the temptation to manipulate God. And Jesus brought us forgiveness by sacrificing himself on the Cross.

11. In what ways do you need to stop manipulating, and start repenting?

Prayer Points

Thank God that Jesus has opened the door to a genuine relationship with God, without us needing to add anything to Jesus’ finished work.

1 Samuel 8-12: Wrong Request, Right Outcome

Think of a time when you had some carefully made plans that got messed up. How did it happen?

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 7:13-8:22

1. What were Samuel's sons like? What does this remind you of back in chapter 1?
2. How do the Israelites respond to having Samuel's sons judging them?
3. What reasons do the Israelites give for needing a King (v5-6, 19-20)
4. How do Samuel and God feel about the Israelites request?
5. According to Samuel, what will be some of the down-sides of having a king?

Interpretation

6. The Judges, who have ruled Israel till now, were temporary saviours appointed by God for a particular situation. A King is a permanent ruler with a dynasty – a line of sons who are expected to follow in his footsteps. Why is the request for a king a strange response to Samuel and Eli's dodgy sons?
7. The request for a king is clearly a rejection of Samuel's sons. How is it also a rejection of God? (Hint: Look at the reasons given for wanting a king, especially think about v19-20 in the light of the events of 1 Samuel 7:10).
8. In what way is God's response in verse 22 surprising?

Group Observation Exercise

9. Divide into pairs and give each pair a section of I Samuel 9-10. Each pair should note everything that they learn about Saul in their section and report back to the whole group.

Section	What you learn about Saul

Interpretation

10. What are the first impressions we are given of Saul?

11. Thinking about Saul as the future King of Israel (which is pretty likely given that he is the first person we meet after the request of chapter 8), what kingly characteristics does he display, or fail to display in the donkey search?

12. How aware is Saul of how God is at work in Israel?

13. In I Sam 10:9 it says that God changed Saul's heart. Is there much evidence of this change in the rest of chapter 10?

In a subtle way, I Samuel 9-10 raises some questions about Saul's suitability as a King. Although he has the right appearance with his striking looks and height, he seems to lack the kind of confidence and competence you'd hope for in a King. Note how he can't find the donkeys, and how it is the servant who takes the lead in getting them off to see Samuel. Even after God's Spirit changes him he still hides among the baggage when he's chosen as king. Another concern about Saul is his total lack of knowledge of God. Again it is the servant who knows about Samuel and suggests they ask for help in their search for the donkeys. And when Saul joins a band of prophets, everyone is so surprised it becomes a whole new saying 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'

In spite of these nagging concerns, Saul makes a reasonable start as King. In chapter 11, with the help of God's Spirit, Saul unites the Israelites to defeat Nahash the Ammonite and his army. In Chapter 12 there is another gathering of the Israelites and Samuel makes his final address to the nation about life with a King.

Read I Samuel 12:12-15

14. Is God still willing to have a relationship with the Israelites in spite of their evil request for a king?

15. Is it possible for the Israelites to serve God faithfully with a king?

Application

16. Israel's request for a king was a failure of trust in God's power to deliver them. When you struggle to trust God's power to deliver you, where are you tempted to turn?

17. Have God's plans for Israel been undone by her sinful request for a king? How is this an encouragement for us when we sin?

18. Do you think Israel's sinful request is likely to have some negative consequences? Why/Why not?

19. God uses the Israelite's sinful request for a king as the first step in his plans to enthrone a righteous King over the whole world. Ultimately, it's through David and his line that God is going to finally bring a 'faithful son' to the throne. Look at Acts 2:22-36. How did God use people's sinfulness in the final step to enthrone his King over the world?

Prayer Points

Thank God for his provision – despite our sin. Ask God to help us live with Him as our King.

1 Samuel 13-15: The King of Appearance

In what ways do people try to appear more 'spiritual' than they actually are?

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 13-14

- In the table below note down everything Jonathan does and everything Saul does and what effect their actions have on Israel

Jonathan's actions	Effects on Israel	Saul's actions	Effects on Israel

Interpretation

- Who seems more effective as a leader, Saul or Jonathan?
- Can you see any of the nagging doubts from chapters 9-10 being fulfilled in the way Saul acts in these chapters?
- Exactly what does Saul do wrong in 1 Samuel 13:8-14?

How is he more concerned with appearance than genuine obedience?

- What punishment does Saul receive for his sin?
- What hints are there about God's plans for the future of the monarchy in Israel?

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 15

- What Similarities and differences do you notice between the events in 1 Samuel 15 and the events of 1 Samuel 13:5-15?

8. What evidence is there that God is still with Saul at the beginning of 1 Samuel 15?
9. Why do you think God gives such harsh instructions to completely wipe out the Ammonites? (for some help check Deuteronomy 25:17-19)
10. According to Samuel, what is the key truth that Saul has misunderstood?

Is this similar to his sin in 1 Samuel 13?
11. How final does God's judgement on Saul seem in 1 Samuel 15? How is this emphasized in the account?
12. How do you reconcile the statements that God is sorry (literally God repents) that he has made Saul king (v11, 35), with the statement that God does not repent (v29)?

The hints of Saul's incompetence and lack of trust in God raised in 1 Samuel 9-10 come to full fruit. Saul's lack of interest in following God's commands is matched only by his lack of leadership and heroism. Saul's failure is especially highlighted by the record of the brave, wise, trusting actions of his son Jonathan.

The most significant theme in 1 Samuel 13-15 however, is Saul's alienation from God. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul disobeys God and is denied the opportunity to have a lasting dynasty. Then, after more blatant disobedience in 1 Samuel 15, he is completely abandoned by God. In both cases Saul seems to have a preference for appearance over substance. He waits for 7 days (the appearance of obedience) in 1 Samuel 13, but he doesn't wait for Samuel himself (the real issue). He kills most of the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15 and has a story ready about sacrificing the remaining loot (appears to be spiritual). But again, he fails the key command to completely wipe out the Amalekites. The chapter ends on a tragic note of God grieving that he made Saul King.

Application

13. We need a king whose obedience is more than just appearances. Have a look at Mark 12:28-34 to see Jesus' standards for integrity.
14. In what areas is your obedience only skin deep? What aspects of Jesus teaching in Mark 12 do you need to take on-board?
15. In Acts 5:1-11, Ananias and Saphira pay the ultimate price for trying to deceive God with outward appearances. What attitude does the church have after this event? Is that attitude evident in our church?

Prayer Points

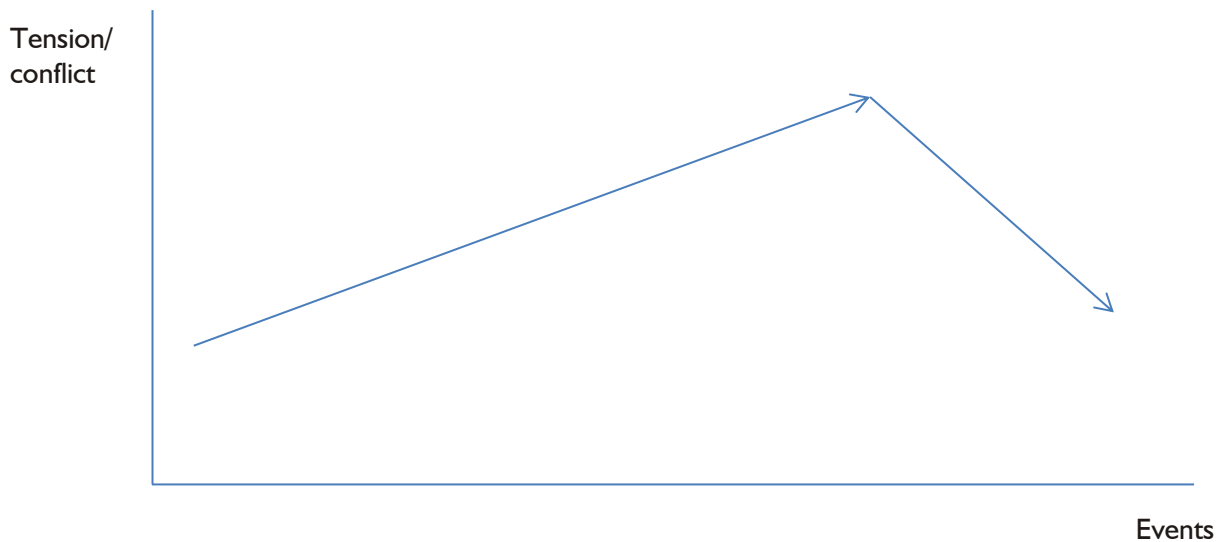
Ask God to help us to be more than skin deep in our trust and obedience.

1 Samuel 16-17: The Unlikely Saviour

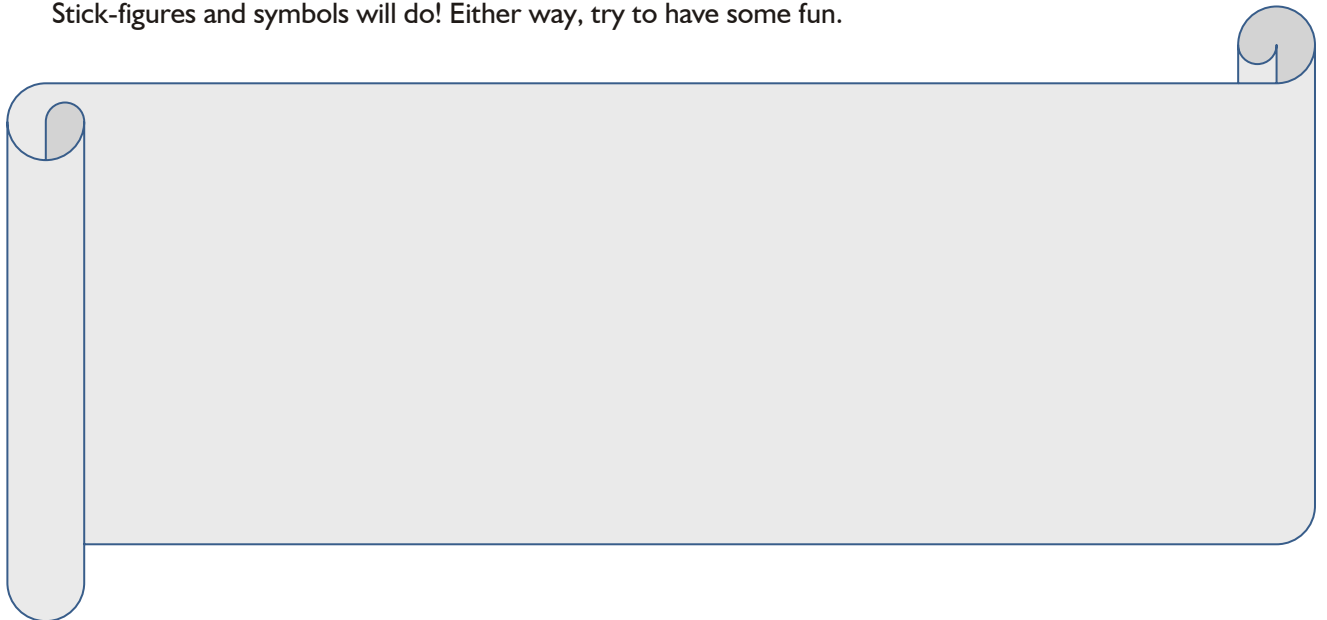
What is the most unusual rescue story you have ever heard?

Observation

1. Label this plot of 1 Samuel 16 by marking key events. How does the tension develop? Where is the climax? How is the situation resolved?



2. Sketch the scene of Samuel choosing David and anointing him. Include as many details as you can. Stick-figures and symbols will do! Either way, try to have some fun.



Interpretation

3. Eliab looked like a King. Who else in 1 Samuel does this remind you of?
4. What does God say about appearances?
5. How does the account emphasise David's unlikely as a choice of king?

6. In what ways does 1 Samuel 16:14-23 confirm what Samuel has said and done in the last few chapters?

7. There are many differences between David and Saul and their anointing, but what are some of the similarities?

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 17 and have a go at completing this table

Participant	Description	Actions/ reactions
David		
Eliab		
Israelite army		
Saul		
Goliath		

8. How is David such an unlikely champion?

Interpretation

9. Who among the Israelites is the most obvious champion to face a Philistine giant?

Why? (Think back to an earlier description!)

10. On the surface, 1 Samuel 17 describes a war between the Israelites and Philistines. What other conflict is going on in this chapter? (see especially the dialogue between Goliath and David)

11. What does David's victory over Goliath confirm about David and about God?

Application

12. I Samuel 16-17 highlights at many points that David does not look like a deliverer. Trace how this pattern reappears as the plan for God's ultimate deliverer – Jesus – takes shape.

Passage	Development of pattern
Isaiah 53:1-6	
Mark 15:25-32	
I Corinthians 1:18-21	

13. What do you think about this statement?: *Any form of Christianity that is not accused of being foolish is not following the Christ of the Bible*

14. In what ways is it tempting to make Jesus, or our faith, appear more impressive?

Pray Together

Pray that we would proclaim the unlikely truth about Jesus.

1 Samuel 18-20: How To Treat God's Anointed

Background

God has rejected Saul as king – because Saul rejected the word of the Lord (15:26). Meanwhile David has been anointed (16:13), entered the service of Saul (16:21), and killed Goliath (17:51). David is on the rise and everyone responds to David in their own way.

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4

1. How does Jonathan respond to David?

Interpretation

2. Jonathan is a proven warrior (14:6-15) and crown prince of Israel. So what is surprising about Jonathan's attitude towards David?
3. At this point in time David is God's anointed – the Christ. Do you think Jonathan's response to David is one that should inform and shape our response to Jesus the Christ? Discuss!

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 18:5-16

4. How does Saul respond to David?

Why is he jealous of David?

Why does Saul fear David?

5. Meanwhile how do the people respond to the rise of David? (v5, 6-7, 16)

Interpretation

6. When you look at verses like 1 Samuel 8:20 and 9:16, what is the difference between David and Saul?
7. How would you describe Saul and his actions in 1 Samuel 18-19?

When David killed Goliath Saul did not know who he was (17:57), but Saul soon recognised David's ability and put him to good use (18:5). At the same time Saul was jealous of David. Jealousy developed into fear – because Saul knew that while he had been rejected by God, God was certainly with David. This situation only intensifies as **Saul's heart is hardened against David**... read on.

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30

8. Talk among the Israelites (1 Sam 17:25) was that Saul had promised great wealth, and the hand of his daughter in marriage – to the man who killed Goliath. Do you think Saul honours this promise? (eg. v19, v23)
9. Why is Saul prepared to offer Merab (v17) and then Michal (v20-21) to David in marriage?
10. What is the outcome of Saul's under-handed plans?

Sadly, Saul becomes less concerned with fighting the Philistines, and more concerned with his fear of David. He becomes so twisted that he wants the Philistines to enjoy victory ... over David. Whilst putting on all the 'outward appearance' of including David in the royal family, through marriage to his daughter, Saul's heartfelt desire is to see David killed by the Philistines. Yet at every turn David succeeds against the Philistines.

*Clearly Saul's plan is not working so **1 Samuel 19** opens with instructions from Saul to his son Jonathan and all the attendants – to kill David. We read of four attempts on David's life. Each time David is spared. In verses 1-7 David is saved by Saul's son, Jonathan. In verses 8-10 David escapes Saul's spear. In verses 11-17 David is saved by Saul's daughter. And quite oddly in verses 18-24 David is rescued by the Spirit of God – who comes on Saul and renders him powerless by causing him to prophesy.*

*In **chapter 20** we have a record of Jonathan's last hope that his father would spare David's life – but it does not end well. If you have time, **Read 1 Samuel 20:20-42**. Saul's futile attempts to foil God's plan and undermine God's Anointed fail time and time again through the remainder of 1 Samuel.*

Interpretation

David would later reflect on these events in his life through his Psalms. Psalm 2 is a Psalm about those who would conspire against the anointed one. Psalm 59 in particular is about the time that his house was under surveillance before his wife Michal helped him escape.

Read Psalm 2

11. How does the Psalm describe the appropriate response to God and His Anointed?
12. If Saul shows us the worst possible response to the anointed one, why is Jonathan's the best possible response?

Application

13. When we think of the different 'categories' of responding rightly to Jesus the Christ (The Anointed One) eg. repentance, worship, obedience, do you think love is as high up on your list as the others? If it is lower down on your list, why do you think that is the case?
14. If you're wondering Jesus talks plenty of times about responding to him in love (eg. Matthew 10:37 and John 14:21) but after reading Philippians 2:8-11, discuss what love means when it comes to Jesus the Christ, our anointed King.

Pray together

Pray that we would love Jesus and live for him.

1 Samuel 21-27: Ends and Means

Can you remember a time when something you really wanted was delayed? How did you feel? Were you tempted ‘speed things along’, perhaps in questionable ways?

1 Samuel 21-27 record a difficult time in the life of David – part of a long wait to claim the throne. David became a fugitive, with Saul pursuing him and driving him into the hands of their common enemy - the Philistines. Let’s begin by tracing David’s erratic journey.

Observation

1. Read these select verses and complete the table. Find each location on the map in study two, and trace David’s journey.

Read this	Where is David?	
21:1		Who does David speak with?
21:10-13		How does David stay alive?
22:1-2		Who joins David?
22:3-4		What was the purpose of this journey?
22:5	Forest of Hereth, in Judah, presumably near Bethlehem	Why did David go here?
23:1-6		Why did David go here?
23:14		
23:26-28		
25:1-2	Desert of moon (or Paran) near Carmel	
27:1-12		How does David manage to survive among the Philistines this time?

Hopefully this exercise has helped you appreciate a little of what David must have been going through – constantly on the move and under threat. There are a few more details to make sure we do not overlook.

Firstly, notice the way Saul had the priests killed. David went to Ahimelech the priest at Nob (1 Sam 21). David asked for food for his men (21:3) and weapons (21:8). Saul’s servant Doeg happened to be there (28:7). Doeg reported these events to Saul (22:9). **Read what Saul did - 1 Samuel 22:16-23.** It is a sad story. One which shows the Saul’s rule coming apart. In contrast to Saul, David left with perhaps the only surviving priest in Israel, enquires of the Lord, time and time again (eg. 23:2, 4...).

Secondly, David has two opportunities to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24:1-4 and 1 Samuel 26:7-12), both times David resists. Both times David says he could not lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed (24:6, 26:23). The irony of course is that Saul is hell bent on doing just that.

Thirdly, have a read of an incident which may well have kept David going. **Read 1 Samuel 25:1-42 quickly**, only paying attention to the ‘big picture.’

Observation

2. How does Abigail act shrewdly?
3. Why does David listen to her?(v32-34)
4. How does God intervene? (v36-40)

Interpretation

5. How might this incident have encouraged David to patiently wait for the Lord's timing?

This section (1 Samuel 21-27) gives an account of David's long wait to claim the throne. There must have been times when David thought that God had given up on him and that he would die as an outlaw. There were no doubt temptations to take a shortcut to power by killing Saul. The account highlights this temptation, as well as David's resolve, by telling us about two opportunities David had to kill Saul. In the midst of the frustration and temptation however David received some wise encouragement from his experience with Nabal and Abigail. God graciously keeps him from killing Nabal in a fit of anger, and then gives him all the good things he might have received from killing Nabal and on top of that, a wise and beautiful wife. It is straight after this experience that David spares Saul's life a second time and waits for God to give him the Kingdom.

Application

6. How do you think David would have responded to the statement 'the end justifies the means'? Why?
7. **Look at Luke 4:1-13.** How do the temptations Jesus faced echo the temptations David must have felt in 1 Samuel 18-27?
8. Why should we be so thankful that Jesus didn't think that the 'ends justifies the means'?
9. What temptations might there be to allow the end to justify the means in the following situations?
 - a. Helping your non-Christian friends to like you
 - b. Not wanting to be lonely
 - c. Having more money to give to God's work
 - d. Getting more people to come to church
 - e. Other situations you can think of?

Pray Together

Ask God to help you trust him to fulfil his promises through His own means, not through short cuts.

1 Samuel 28-31: Without Hope & Without God?

Have you ever faced a time in your life where absolutely everything seemed to be going wrong?

In the closing chapters of 1 Samuel we see Saul and David – both in complex situations. However for Saul we witness his complete hopelessness, as he lives out the horror of having ignored God and hardened his heart against God and God’s Anointed. It is painful to witness, but helpful to learn from.

Background

Re-read 1 Samuel 15:27-31, 34-35

1. What hope does Saul have in establishing his rule over Israel?

Re-read 1 Samuel 27:1-4

2. Saul considers David his enemy. How does David escape from Saul?

David survives among the Philistines. Meanwhile, Saul is no doubt left with the impression that his two worst enemies, David and the Philistines, are now united against him.

Observation

Read 1 Samuel 28:1-7

3. List the reasons Saul has to fear.
4. What happens when Saul attempts to call on God?
5. What does Saul resort to?

The next section of the passage triggers questions, perhaps the most prominent being: “Did the woman really bring up dead Samuel?” While we have our questions, the narrator is not distracted by them. So let’s do our best to put our questions to one side as we read the text for what it is saying.

Read 1 Samuel 28:8-25

6. Why is the woman surprised?
7. Why does Saul say he has resorted to calling on dead Samuel?
8. How do dead Samuel’s words in verses 16-19 compare with Samuel’s earlier words to Saul (1 Samuel 15:27-31)?

Interpretation

9. How does the narrator want us to view Saul’s predicament?

Application

10. Read Ephesians 2:11-13. Talk about how Saul's situation might be considered similar to that of not knowing Jesus?

The last chapter of I Samuel recounts events which fulfil what Samuel spoke about Saul. The Philistines fought against Israel and it is a complete disaster for Israel. Saul and his sons all die. It is a sad ending to the book. But sandwiched between chapter 28 and chapter 31 we have the account of David. Like Saul, David is in the midst of an incredibly complicated mess. Unlike Saul, David consults God constantly, and he is saved by God at every turn.

Observation

Read I Samuel 29:1-5

11. How is David spared from being forced to fight his own countrymen?

It may be that the Philistine commanders spoke more truth than they realised. Perhaps David was Israel's only hope in battle that day? What we are told is that David has a reprieve. But upon returning to he discovers that the Amalekites have raided their homes and taken their families.

Read I Samuel 30:6-26

12. List the times David enquired of God.

13. Discuss the way God saves David?

14. How does David prove to be wise and fair in his dealings with his men?

Interpretation

15. How is David's situation different to Saul's?

Saul is a tragic figure in these chapters. By contrast, David is protected and guided by God in every step he takes. It's not that he has no problems. But God talks to him through the priest, God helps him through an Egyptian slave, and God enables him to win a great victory which brings blessing to his people.

Application

I Samuel 28-31 contrasts life without God and without hope, with life under God's care. It contrasts the king of outward appearances with the king who rules under God. Surely we are to see hints and shadows of what God's ultimate King will be like – King Jesus.

16. In what ways is Jesus like King David, and the ways he is better than King David.

Prayer

Thank God that in Jesus we have a King like David ... but better!