



# 9

# God Calls Samuel

## Key Theme

- God uses people to accomplish His perfect plans.

## Key Passages

- 1 Samuel 2:23–26, 3:2–13, 3:15, 4:10–11

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Samuel responded to God.
- Describe how God judged Israel and Eli.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Strips.

- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Print on cardstock if possible. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



### Activity 1: God Calls Samuel Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God Calls Samuel Class Notes as you study the lesson.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



### Studying God's Word

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Samuel was the last judge of Israel. The first message Samuel received from the Lord was a terrible message of judgment against the household of Eli. Samuel obediently delivered the message, and the Lord fulfilled the judgment.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through 1 Samuel 1–4.
- Go Before the Throne.



### Activity 2: Lucky Charms

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Students will consider the superstitious way the Israelites used the Ark of the Covenant in the battle against the Philistines and will examine similar practices in today's culture.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading 1 Samuel 1–4.

As the book of 1 Samuel opens, we meet Hannah, wife of Elkanah. She was in distress at being childless. During an annual visit to the Tabernacle in Shiloh, Hannah breathed a prayer to God, asking Him for a son. She vowed to the Lord that if He would grant her a son, he would be given to the Lord's service for his whole life, and no razor would touch his head. Her wordless prayer was mistaken by the high priest Eli for drunkenness, but after Hannah shared her grief and prayer with the priest, he blessed her, asking God to grant her request. The Lord did remember her, and she conceived. Her son was born, and she "called his name Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked for him from the Lord'" (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah cared for him in the family's home until he was weaned. Then she gave him into the care of Eli the priest, so that Samuel would be devoted to serving the Lord as a helper to the priest, just as Hannah had promised the Lord.

Eli seemed to be a devout man, but he was weak regarding his responsibilities. His sons were wicked, corrupt, immoral, and self-serving (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 2:22), and though Eli admonished them, he failed to restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13). God's judgment was pronounced not only on Eli's house, but was conveyed also to Israel (1 Samuel 2:27–36).

The entire period of the judges shows a cycle of behavior in Israel: wickedness and idolatry, judgment, cries for mercy, deliverance by God through the means

of a judge or deliverer, and then a lapse back into wickedness, which started the cycle all over again.

Through these events, Samuel played an innocent, faithful part. God had chosen to reveal His plan of judgment to this young man under Eli's care. We read the account in 1 Samuel 3. Samuel was asleep and thought that he heard Eli call him. The priest had not called, and at the third visit from Samuel, Eli realized that the Lord was the one speaking. Eli instructed Samuel to be receptive and obedient: "you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears'" (1 Samuel 3:9). In this context Samuel was "hearing" with a will to obey. Samuel received the fearful news from the Lord that night, the news of God's plan to judge Eli's household (1 Samuel 3:11–12). The judgment foretold to Samuel would prove to be God's final judgment on Israel during this dark era of history. God was preparing to raise up a king. Unfortunately, even under their kings, Israel continued to be unfaithful to God, and both Israel and Judah ended up in captivity.

Eli's response to the judgment intended for him and his family may seem noble at first: "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him" (1 Samuel 3:18). But at closer look, Eli's history of failing to manage his own household after repeated pronouncement of judgment gives indication that Eli was inappropriately passive—unmoved to act by the Lord's warning, just as he had been previously.

After the pronouncement of God's judgment, Israel went out to battle against the Philistines (chapter 4). Israel was defeated. The people responded by sending for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought to the battlefield (1 Samuel 4:3–4), apparently thinking that it would serve as a kind of spiritual force of protection and power.

The people believed that the Lord's power was necessary to defeat the Philistines. But this belief seems distorted when we consider the corruption in the Tabernacle, perpetrated by Eli's sons, and the continuing cycle of the nation's idolatry recorded in the book of Judges. Their intent in this instance was to use the Ark of the Covenant as assurance of victory through God's power. However, the living and true God will not be used; He will not allow even His covenant people victory if they attempt to use Him for their own ends, rather than serving and glorifying Him. God intends that His power and might—not the power and might of men—be revealed and praised.

The Philistines did, in fact, fear the outcome of the battle when the Ark was brought in. But they had no idea that God's judgment on His people was about to be executed. The Philistines won that battle and captured the Ark of the Covenant. Both of Eli's sons died in the battle, just as God had told Samuel (1 Samuel 4:9–11). And Eli, upon hearing that the Ark was taken, fell backward off his seat, broke his neck, and died (1 Samuel 4:18). This was indeed a dark time for Israel.

## **HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND**

There are many parallels between Samuel and Christ. Both were conceived by God's intervention, though only Jesus was conceived in a virgin by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34–35). Both were to be instrumental in the deliverance of Israel, though the kinds of deliverance were different (1 Samuel 7:3–13 and Matthew 1:21). Both were used by God to usher in a kingdom. Both arrived on the scene at a time in history

when God's dealing with Israel was to change dramatically. Both spoke God's words; they were His prophets (Christ also being priest and king). And the song of Hannah bears remarkable resemblance to the song of Mary (1 Samuel 2:1–10; Luke 1:46–55).

There are other similarities in descriptions and phrases, such as both being described from childhood as growing in stature and in favor with God and men (1 Samuel 2:26 and Luke 2:52). Samuel is a type—a pattern, a living illustration—foreshadowing God's unfolding plan to bring Jesus to save His people from their sins. By definition, types are necessarily incomplete, imperfect illustrations, but the similarities are still striking; and as we look back from our time, they show how God was graciously preparing Israel for the "fullness of time" in which the Messiah would come.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## **BEFORE THE THRONE**

Dear Lord, I praise you for always being fair and just. I will trust you. May my actions be pleasing to you as I prepare and teach this lesson. Help me to be diligent and enthusiastic as I explain the truths in your Word. Prepare the hearts and minds of the students. Remove all obstacles and distractions that would make it difficult for parents to get to church and for students to concentrate. Reveal your truth to us again, and help us apply that truth faithfully in our lives.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at 1 Samuel 1, 2, 3 and 4 with strips of paper.
- They will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verse together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

*This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.*



## Review

Last week we saw how God blessed the faithfulness of Ruth. We mentioned that the events of her life happened during the period of the judges. Today, we are going to look at the last of the judges, Samuel. We have skipped over most of the accounts in

the book of Judges, and I encourage you to go back and read through the book of Judges to get the big picture of what happened during those 300 years.



## God Calls Samuel Class Notes

### MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Have students fill in the blanks of the God Calls Samuel Class Notes in their Student Guides as you study today's lesson.*

We will be completing the class notes in your Student Guides as we study the Bible passages. Try not to work ahead. Fill in the blanks as we come to them. I'll let you know when to fill in something.



# Studying God's Word

► Write on the board, "Do you have a lucky rabbit's foot?"

## READ THE WORD

Let's read the first three chapters of 1 Samuel together. Remember that we want to keep the context of a passage in mind as we study it. *Have several people read the passage aloud.*

1 Samuel 1-3

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

Obviously, these three chapters contain more than we could cover in many hours of discussion, so we are going to focus on two aspects of the account: Samuel's response to God and God's judgment on Eli and Israel. Let's go over the questions in your Student Guide. Fill in the answers as we discuss them.

1. **In 1 Samuel 1, how did Samuel wind up in the service of Eli?** *Have students write their answers in the Student Guides. Hannah was barren (could not have children) and promised God that she would give her child to His service if He would grant her a son. God was pleased to answer her prayer, and after he was weaned, Samuel was given to serve the Lord at the Tabernacle in Shiloh.*
2. **What do Hannah's actions and her prayer in chapter 2 tell us about her?** *She had true faith in God and recognized many of His attributes (holiness, sovereignty, faithfulness, justice, etc.). Studying the prayer in chapter 2 along with the rest of her statements reveals that she understood that God could grant her a child. It was God who had closed her womb according to 1:5 and God who granted her a child according to 1:19-20. Hannah trusted God through her trial!*
3. **Who was Eli?** *He was the priest (2:11) at the Tabernacle in Shiloh (2:14).*
4. **What do we learn about Eli's two sons?** *They were corrupt and did not know the Lord (2:12). They were stealing the meat intended for sacrifice (2:13-17). They were fornicating with women at the Tabernacle (2:22), and they did not listen to their father's rebukes because God intended to kill them (2:25).*
5. **How could we rate Eli as a father?** *Although he rebuked his sons, Eli obviously did not train them or discipline them to obey himself or God (2:22-25, 3:13). Also, 2:29 implies that he was also eating the choice cuts of meat and getting heavy (4:18) alongside his sons as he honored them above God.*
6. **By contrast to Hophni and Phinehas, how is Samuel described in these passages?** *Samuel served faithfully (2:18) and grew in stature and favor with the Lord and men (2:26).*

7. **What other young man is described in a very similar way elsewhere in Scripture?** *1 Samuel 2:26 is very similar to the description of the young Jesus in Luke 2:52.*
8. **In 1 Samuel 2:27–36, what judgment does this unnamed prophet pronounce?** *Eli's sons will die young on the same day, and their descendants will not retain the service of the priesthood.*
9. **How old was Samuel in chapter 3 when he received his first vision?** *We don't know from the text other than to say he was still a boy. Most commentators would suggest he was in his teens, but we cannot be certain of his age.*
10. **Was revelation from God common at that time?** *There was not widespread revelation (3:1), though there was at least one prophet speaking for God (2:27).*
11. **Once Samuel realized that God was speaking to him, not Eli, how did he respond?** *He was willing to listen (3:10), but reluctant to deliver the message of judgment (3:15).*
12. **How did Eli respond to the message from God?** *He acknowledged that God could do what pleased Him (3:18).*
13. **Did the people recognize Samuel's role as a prophet?** *Yes, 3:19–21 and 4:1a make it clear that all of Israel (Dan being the extreme north and Beersheba being the extreme south) acknowledged Samuel as a prophet of the Lord. Also, note that the chapter break is very awkward, and the first part of 4:1 actually belongs with the end of chapter 3. The chapter and verse divisions are not part of the inspired text and were added later.*

IMMUTABLE

SOVEREIGN

GRACIOUS

JUST

FAITHFUL

### Discover the Truth

In these chapters, we see some stark contrasts in the way different people responded to God. Hannah and Samuel acted dramatically different than Eli and his sons. But God does not change. We know that He is immutable—His character and nature are constant.

- ? **How do we see God's immutable character in this account?** *We see His sovereignty over Hannah's barrenness, and His control is also acknowledged in Eli's response to Samuel's vision. We see His grace directed toward Hannah and His justice toward Eli and his sons.*
- ? **What attribute of God lets us know that God will bring about the judgment that He has promised?** *He is faithful to His promises, even promises of judgment.*





# Lucky Charms

## MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

## INSTRUCTIONS

Our activity for this lesson looks at the next part of this account. At some point after Samuel's vision (the text doesn't give us any clues about the timing), the Israelites went to battle the Philistines. The Philistines were the people to the east near the Mediterranean Sea whom the Israelites did not utterly destroy. Turn to the Lucky Charms activity in your Student Guides.

No, this activity is not about a breakfast cereal, but about the superstitious practices that many religious people participate in . . . maybe even you! Answer the questions, and we will discuss them in a few minutes. You can work in small groups if you would like.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

*Discuss the activity with the students, trying to draw out some of the superstitious ideas that they may be guilty of.*

**1. List out as many cultural superstitious practices, items, or sayings as you can in two minutes.** *Carrying charms, medals of saints, statues in the house or yard, burning candles or incense, throwing salt over your shoulder, knocking on wood, hanging a horseshoe, walking under ladders, opening umbrellas, breaking mirrors, seeing black cats, ending every prayer with "in Jesus's name" (without any real thought), never placing your Bible in a certain place or position, "good luck," "break a leg," fortune cookies, etc.*

**2. Read 1 Samuel 4:1–11. What was the purpose of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the battle?** *They believed the tide would turn and they would be able to defeat the Philistines if the ark was with them.*

**3. Look carefully at 1 Samuel 4:3. What mistake did the Israelites make?** *They put their trust in the presence of an object, one that represented God's presence, and not in God Himself. They said, "it may save us." We must guard our own hearts against this tendency to put our trust in the things God has given us rather than in God.*

**4. How does the Israelites' use of the Ark of the Covenant compare to the use of items or the practice of activities from question 1?** *If we put our trust in the presence of a charm or the reciting of a phrase, we are looking with hope and trust to a part of the creation rather than the Creator.*

**5. Are there any of these superstitious practices that you need to repent of?** *Remind the students that God is gracious to us through Christ's sacrifice and by the Holy Spirit's power.*

Ultimately, these tokens and notions are an abomination to God. They shift our attention from His good and sovereign purposes in our lives and make us think that God is not in control. This type of thinking should be nowhere in the mind of a follower of Christ. We have sure and true promises from a faithful and powerful God, and we must put our trust in Him alone. God judged Eli's household and Israel for their sinful acts. Let us make sure that we hear the warnings of God through His Word and not repeat those acts.



## READ THE WORD

Let's close out the lesson by reading the rest of chapter 4, starting in verse 12. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

- ? **How was God's judgment on Eli's household fulfilled?** *He died when he heard that his sons had both died and the ark had been captured. God fulfilled the promises of 2:31–34 and 3:11–14.*
- ? **Where was the Ark of the Covenant?** *The Philistines had taken it captive and brought it to Ashdod (5:1).*
- ? **How does the naming of Phinehas's son depict how the Israelites viewed the capture of the ark?** *He was named Ichabod because his mother believed the glory of God had departed from Israel when the Ark of the Covenant was captured. Since the presence of the ark represented the presence of God in Israel, its capture suggested that not only was the ark gone but God Himself and all His glory were now in enemy hands. To the pagans it was conceivable that gods could be taken into exile (see Isaiah. 46:1–2). The Israelites should have known, however, that their omnipresent God could not be taken away from them.*

### Discover the Truth

Just as God had promised, judgment came to Eli and his sons for perverting worship. Samuel was now leading the nation as prophet, priest, and judge. Samuel was the last of the judges before the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, but we will get to that next week.



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we have seen in many of our lessons, God used the actions of people to bring about His plans. His judgment on Eli's house was carried out by the Philistines. Samuel was raised up by the Lord after his special birth—the faithful prayer of his mother moved God to grant her a son. God used

Samuel and another prophet to deliver His messages. Samuel grew up to be the judge of Israel and would usher in an era of restoration in Israel, though the Philistines troubled them for many years.

Through all of this, we see examples of faithfulness and faithlessness. In it all, God brought about His purposes, and He was glorified.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What lesson can we learn today from Samuel's response to God?** *We need to be willing to humbly receive what God has revealed to us in His Word. There will likely be times when we don't want to receive the truth or communicate the truth the Bible contains, but we must do both.*
- ? **We read of how the Israelites put their trust in the presence of the ark rather than in God. Where can you confront the use of good luck charms and medallions or other superstitious practices while pointing people to Christ?** *Superstitious practices and the use of charms can be found almost everywhere, so using these things as a springboard into the gospel should be fairly easy.*
- ? **How does learning about the attributes of God displayed in these accounts offer you assurance?** *God's immutability and the consistent demonstration of His perfect character should be a great source of encouragement and assurance for every believer. He is faithful and able to bring about all He has promised.*
- ? **With whom could you share what you have learned today to encourage or challenge them?** *Discuss various answers, and challenge the students to discuss the ideas further with others in either fellowship or evangelism.*



### MEMORY VERSE

**1 Samuel 16:7** But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for His perfect and unchanging character.
- Thank God for using even weak and broken vessels for His service.
- Ask God for help, by the Holy Spirit, to repent of and flee from superstitious ideas.

