

**Purpose**

- To learn about Hannah and Samuel
- To learn about Saul
- To learn about King David

**Background Information**

## SAMUEL

First and Second Samuel were the first set of “twin” books in the Bible. Originally, the 2 books of Samuel were 1 book. When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, it was so long that it was separated into 2 shorter books. Samuel is the first of 3 men whose lives overlap and intertwine through the book of 1 Samuel. At this time, the people of Israel had drifted away from the Lord and they were searching for a human king to solve all their problems. Regretfully, they found out that the wrong king only made matters worse.

In 1 Samuel 1-8, we learn that Samuel was dedicated to the Lord even before he was born. Hannah, his mother, was unable to have children, so she promised God that if He gave her a son, she would give him back to God to serve in the tabernacle. You may have heard the story of how Hannah presented Samuel to Eli so he could serve in the temple. Eli and his 2 bad boys were the priests of Israel. God protects the boy and while Samuel is sleeping beside the ark of the covenant, God begins to call him and give him a message. This story makes it clear that Eli is unfamiliar with messages from God. When the voice of God first comes to Samuel, he thinks Eli is calling him. Twice more this happened and Samuel reported to Eli each time. Eli finally got the point and told Samuel what to answer to God. The fourth try, God communicates the message that Eli’s household is about to be destroyed, because Eli’s sons frequently changed God’s instructions to fit their own whims. God’s judgment came down when Eli’s sons were killed in battle and the ark of the covenant was taken by Israel’s enemies. When Eli heard the news, he fell off his chair and died.

When Eli died, Samuel became the head priest and governed Israel until he was over 90 years old. At the end of Samuel’s time as priest, the people of Israel requested that they wanted a king not a priest. They wanted a human king (not an invisible ruling from heaven) like the other nations around them. Samuel argued with them, but they insisted. God instructed Samuel to give them what they wanted.

## SAUL

God instructed Samuel to prepare a feast for the new king of Israel. Saul joined in the feast and was given a special dish saved for the honored guest, although Saul was not aware that he was the honored guest. God instructed Samuel to take Saul aside the next day, anoint him with oil by pouring oil over his head and upper body. Thus Saul became Israel's first king. Saul was a very impressive man to look at. He looked like the perfect king, and things started out well. The spirit of the Lord came upon him, and godly advisors helped him. Gaining a few military victories didn't hurt him either. Success came too fast and too easy, because Saul began to think that the leader's moral integrity didn't matter.

Saul first act of disobedience to God in is chapter 13. His armies were ready for battle, but Samuel had told Saul that offerings to God needed to be made before the battle began. Samuel was late, so Saul did the sacrifice. Big mistake!! He always had a good excuse for his disobedience, but his decline had begun. Time after time, Saul ignored God's instructions. Nothing went right for Saul, and he became very jealous of David, a young shepherd boy. Samuel soon saw the signs and began to repudiate Saul as king.

## DAVID

As much went right for David as went wrong for Saul. David was a young teenager stuck with the job of watching his father's sheep. He wasn't much to look at, but God saw his inner strength, integrity and faith.

One of the best-known stories of the Bible is when David confronted Goliath (chapter 17). This giant of a man was over 9 feet tall. Rather than the 2 countries battle, Goliath challenged Israel to a winner take all battle. One warrior from Israel would fight Goliath. If Israel's champion won, the enemies of Israel would serve them. If Goliath won, Israel would submit to bondage. No one stepped up to the challenge, so young David, on a food supply mission to his brothers, took him on with a sling and a stone. David's victory over Goliath made him an instant national hero. It also made Saul jealous of the young upstart. Saul tried twice to take David's life, but was unsuccessful, so David had to run. For 14 years, David eluded Saul's manhunt by living in the desert southwest of Jerusalem. At first David was alone, but more and more men began to join him until he had a fairly large army. David refused to fight Saul, because he knew that God would put him on the throne of Israel in God's own time.

Another conflict arose when Jonathan, Saul's son, became best friends with David. Saul did everything in his power to destroy the relationship between Jonathan and David, but the love between David and Jonathan was a beautiful thing. Even in today's world, it is very hard for adult males to express affection for one another. This seems to

make the friendships even closer, but the men involved many times feel it is impossible to show how they feel about each other.

This long period of conflict between Saul and David actually did much to prepare David to rule as Israel's king. While David was in hiding, he learned much about the Philistine military strategy and tactics. Later on he used this knowledge to defeat the Philistines. The Moabites had a very good relationship with David, and they took care of his family while Saul was persecuting him.

1 Samuel closes with Saul's death. In a battle with the Philistines, Saul's 3 sons were killed and Saul was mortally wounded. Because he feared being tortured by his enemies, he deliberately fell on his own sword. Saul started well as a king, but when he didn't fully obey the Lord, his life ended tragically. Saul's downfall was his obsession with his own image. Instead of being concerned about how God evaluated him, he wanted to look good to the people around him. Saul had it all, but when the pressure was on, he chose to disobey God and compromise his integrity. Even in his death, he trusted only in himself, and not in God.

## **Procedure**

- Do 11-1, 11-2 and 11-3 are to be done for fun.