

SAMUEL - Last Judge and First Prophet

In the days of Samuel, God needed a man of stature and influence to lead the nation through a transition. Samuel was the last judge, and the first prophet.

The prophets were men God raised up to speak His word to the kings of Israel. Samuel oversaw the beginnings of the monarchy in Israel. He anointed the first two kings, Saul and David. And gave needed instruction to them both.

Samuel's ministry was similar to the ministry of John the Baptist - both were lifelong Nazirites - and both were forerunners of Davidic kings. Samuel served

David - first in the divinely appointed lineage. Whereas, John served Jesus, the last of the lineage - and heir to all the promises God had made to David.

Samuel has been called "*the prophet of prayer*". On several occasions he rallied the nation to pray. As God said in Jeremiah 15, He was one of the mightiest intercessors in the Bible. Is it any wonder that when he died the entire nation gathered to his home in Ramah to mourn his death?

The people of Israel loved Samuel, because they knew he loved them.

COMPOUNDED GODLINESS

The life of Samuel was a stream of unbroken holiness. Plot his years on a timeline, and there'd be no breaks for rebellion - no seasons sowing wild oats - no lapses of spiritual laziness - no periods of moral compromise. As a child, Samuel's mother dedicated him to God, and he remained devoted for the rest of his long life.

Samuel's life is an example of compounded godliness. When you open a money market account at the bank you expect to benefit from compound interest. The money you make - makes more money. The interest rolls back into the investment. It feeds on itself. It builds and grows and snowballs.

And the same principle applies to spiritual investments. The person who lives for God receives compound benefits. A heart devoted to purity grows increasingly pure. A mind fixed on heavenly things becomes more and more elevated in its thoughts. A will bent toward God grows in the direction of the bend - it leans out further towards God. A spirit willing to muster faith adds muscle to that faith.

Jesus says in Luke 8:18, "Whoever has, to him

more will be given..." This was Samuel. Years of compounded purity, loyalty, faith, and listening to God - all added up. It compounded into a man of character, integrity, and spiritual stature. His years of godly living bestowed on Samuel an authority that enabled him to hold the nation in check, and usher in a new age of Israel's history.

In Jeremiah 15:1 the Lord is bemoaning the sin of a future generation when He makes the statement, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people..." Notice the Lord Himself lumps Moses and Samuel in the same category - both were powerful intercessors.

Here's why young people need to live sold out to Christ - holiness compounds like interest. A life devoted to Christ at an early age, not only benefits you now, but the years of godly living grow into a stature and authority God can use mightily. Make too many withdrawals from God - don't give godliness an opportunity to accumulate - create too many lapses on the timeline - and you lose out.

Devotion Box - An Irretrievable Commitment

In 1 Samuel 7:6 Samuel performs a ritual that solidifies their commitment to the Lord. He pours out water. Can you think of a more irretrievable act than pouring water? Once the liquid tumbles from the pitcher, it can never be fully retrieved. Once the water is gone, it's gone.

This is the kind of commitment God requires from us, "*Lord, I dedicate myself to You. Once I give my life to you, I'll never take it back.*"

Remember Twigg Sanders of the Harlem Globetrotters. He had a routine he did with a basketball on a rubber band. He'd throw it up, but it would snap right back. Too many people have a Twigg commitment to Christ. They're giving their heart to God, then taking it back. We need to pour out our lives to the Lord.

Devotion Box - God's Sovereignty

In 1 Samuel 1:5 it's said of Hannah, "the Lord had closed her womb."

God is sovereign over all things - and that includes human conception. He can close a womb, or open a womb. At times He has purposes for both.

Here too, as in every area of life, we need to acknowledge and trust in the sovereignty of God.

In what area of your life do you need this reminder?

HANNAH'S PRAYER

Hannah prays in 1 Samuel 1:11, "Remember me, and not forget your maidservant". For two years Kathy and I tried to have children, but to no avail, and I witnessed firsthand the passion that went into the prayers of a barren woman. Kathy latched onto Hannah's words in verse 11, and kept praying "*Lord, remember me...*"

We were at a pastors conference, and Kathy asked the wives to lay hands on her, and pray for her to have a child. As they prayed the Lord spoke in a prophecy, "*By this time next year you will have a child.*" To make a long story short, our first son was born the very same weekend exactly one year later. We were blessed.

And in light of the prayer that Kathy - and Hannah - had prayed, we named our son, "*Zachary*", which means "*remembered of the Lord.*"

Oh, the power of passionate prayer! James 5:17 tells us, "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man (or woman) avails much." Guys, pour out your soul to the Lord, and watch Him pour out His blessings on you, and your needs.

A PARENT'S PRIORITY

In 1 Samuel 3:13 the Lord says, "For I have told him (meaning, Eli) that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them."

Eli failed to restrain his kids, and God brought judgment on his house forever.

A parent's primary purpose is to restrain their kids. The other night I took a bar of soap and washed out a little boy's foul mouth. I made another son give me 75 push-ups for an raunchy attitude. Guys, don't be afraid to discipline and spank your kids.

The Bible, and just one night in the preschool department, teaches us that kids are sinners by nature. It's a parent's job to curb rebellion and insist on obedience.

Devotion Box - Are You Praying Prayers Or Just Saying Prayers ?

Hannah's prayer was so passionate, so emotional, so personal, so uninhibited... Eli the priest thought she was drunk - *she'd been sipping the sauce.*

Her lips moved, but she prayed in her heart. Unlike most folks, Hannah came to the synagogue - not to impress the bystanders, but to do business with God.

You've got to think it was no accident that the man who was called "*the prophet of prayer*" had a mother who put it to practice. I have no doubt, Samuel gained his *passion for prayer* - and his *power in prayer* - from his godly mother, Hannah.

Guys, there's a difference between *saying prayers*, and really *praying prayers*.

Too many people have turned prayer into a performance. It's a point on the Sunday program where a man stands and prays to the people. It reminds me of the man in church who shouted his prayer. One little boy told his mother later, "Mom, if that man lived closer to God I bet he wouldn't have to shout so loud."

Hannah said she "*poured out her soul to God*". She prayed like her prayer mattered. Is that how you pray? Do you need to add a little intensity to your prayer life? If your prayer doesn't matter on earth what makes you think it will matter in heaven?

I PLEDGE MY SON TO HEAVEN

Like Hannah we all need to give our kids to the Lord, but there's no longer any need to give them literally. Between James and I, *eight is enough*.

But we do need to understand the spirit of her action. She realized that her son didn't belong to her – he was God's property – and he'd been given to her on loan.

Parent, your kid is a loaner.

If I borrowed your car I'd take extreme care to keep from damaging what doesn't belong to me. Likewise, be careful how you treat your son or daughter – even though I'm footing the bill, they really don't belong to me.

Keith Green sang a song of devotion. The first stanza said, "I pledge my head to heaven for the Gospel." The second got harder, "I pledge my wife to heaven for the Gospel."

But for me, the third stanza was the toughest of all, "I pledge my son to heaven for the Gospel." It's okay for me to take on the risk, and trust the Lord, and go to a foreign country to share the love of Jesus, but what's my reaction when my son or daughter want to go?

Have we dedicated our kids to God?

Parenting is really a process of giving back to God the gift He's giving you. From day one, you're turning loose of your child a little at a time. Author Alfred Torrie writes, "It needs courage to let our children go, but we are trustees and stewards and have to hand them back to life – to God. As the old saying puts it: 'What I gave I have.' We have to love them and lose them."

WHEN GOD HITS BELOW THE BELT

1 Samuel 5:6 tells us, "The hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod..." And here's the only time I've ever been tempted to feel sorry for a Philistine: it continues, "He ravaged them and struck them with tumors (or it could refer to "hemorrhoids")".

This is a severe, serious, bare-knuckled judgment! And remember this is long before the days of suppositories and Preparation H. No doubt about it, this is no holds-barred judgment. God hits below the belt...

It's interesting - so often we think it's up to us to defend God's reputation and fight God's battles. But in chapter 5, God humbles the Philistine deity, and the Philistines themselves. Israel, God's people, have been unfaithful, yet God still sees to it that His enemies are judged, and He is glorified.

ELI'S SECOND CHANCE

Though Eli blew it with his sons, God gave him a second chance at parenting by entrusting Samuel into his care. This time he does it right, and his strategy is reflected in chapter 3.

Eli was an *active* parent. Note: "Samuel ministered to the LORD *before Eli...*" Eli was right there – engaged and involved spiritually. Good parents keep bringing their kids to church. They keep them in the Tabernacle ministering to the Lord.

Eli was also *accessible*. When Samuel heard the voice he knew he was important to Eli, and could run to him whenever he had a need. A little boy once said, "I know my dad loves me when he reads me books." Then he added, "And he really loves me when he doesn't skip any of the words." Guys, always remember kids spell "love"... T - I - M - E. Be accessible.

A good parent will always remember they are an *ambassador* of God. Samuel heard God speak, but he thought it was Eli. Earthly parents and our heavenly Father are closely associated in a child's mind. Christian musicians, Philips, Craig, and Dean, have put to music a father's prayer. Here's the memorable line, "God, I want to be like You, because he wants to be like me." Parents, always remember you represent God to your child.

Of course, the Lord calls Samuel a third time, and when he comes to Eli, the wise old priest realizes what's really going on. Hey, his *eyesight* was gone, but his *insight* was still sharp. He was *aware* of what was happening in his Samuel's life. An effective parent looks for insight into what's happening in their child's life. If God is speaking, I want to encourage them to listen. If they're confused, I want to explain. If they're afraid, I want to comfort. Parents need their antennas up at all times. Good parents look for the teachable moment.

And I'm always amazed Eli went back to sleep. If I knew God was in the next room speaking in an audible voice to my son, I'd try to eavesdrop. Evidently, Eli wanted Samuel to gain some *autonomy* in his relationship with God. He wanted Samuel to develop his own intimacy and interaction with God. He knew when to take a *hands-on* approach, and when to take his *hands off*.

If God is giving you a second chance at parenting pay attention to the right attitudes: *be active, accessible, an ambassador, aware, and provide autonomy*.

Bible Scan - 1 Samuel 1-7

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - February 13, 2000

→Next Bible Scan- February 20- 1 Samuel 8-15

-Tuesday, February 15th: Ladies Morning Bible Study 10:00 a.m. & Ladies Evening Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

-Wednesday, February 16th: HS Impact (Acts Chapter 1) 7:00 p.m. & Café 7:30 p.m.

-Thursday, February 17th: Musician's Meeting 7:00 p.m.

-Friday, February 18th: Horizons (Meets at Steve Lee's Home) 7:30 p.m. & Father/Daughter Square Dance Cost: \$3/ per person 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

-Sunday, February 20th: Worship & Bible Study 9:30 a.m. & 11:15 a.m. BIBLE BLAST! 1st- 5th grades

Calvary Chapel Christian School Open House 3:00 p.m. MS Youth Bible Study 6:30 p.m.

-Tuesday, February 22nd: Women's Prayer, Praise & (Soup & Salad) Potluck

February 25 - 26th: CCSM Women's Conference- "God's Design" Cost: \$15 register in either foyer. Deadline Feb. 20th

***"If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods... from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."* - 1 Samuel 7:3**

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

Devotion Box - A Misplaced faith ?

The men of Israel look for help - they're calling for back-up - but rather than cry out to the Lord, they bring out the Ark of the Lord. The Ark of the Covenant was in Shiloh. It occupied the holy of holies in the Tabernacle. It was the gold-plated box, with the two cherubim on the lid - over which the visible presence of God rested.

But the men of Israel made a mistake. They assumed the Ark had powers of its own. They treated it like a four-leaf clover, or a rabbit's foot. The Ark was just a box.

What made the Ark of the Covenant so special and holy was that God choose to rest over it while it sat in the Tabernacle. Israel needed to trust in God Himself - not in the things of God and relics of God. They fell victim to a misplaced faith.

This was a reoccurring mistake throughout Israel's history. In Jeremiah's day the Jews thought they were invincible since Jerusalem was home of the Temple.

In Romans 2 Paul discusses the Jews misplaced confidence in their knowledge of Scripture. Just because they possessed the Law, and knew the Law, they felt immune from its judgments. They gave no thought to actually obeying the Law.

Guys, you and I can become guilty of a misplaced faith. Because I go to this church, or attend a weekly Bible study, or serve on the worship team, or teach Sunday School I'll be okay - or... God this is why you need to help me... look at all I do. That's a misplaced faith. I'm trusting in *my works* rather than *Christ's work*.

It can be so subtle. Because we've listened to a CD of soothing worship music - or we've read a few Bible verses, or a chapter from a Christian book - or maybe we've fellowshiped on the phone - we assume we've been with God. We've indulged ourselves in the things of God, but have we really been with God?

Devotion Box - Two Extremes

There are two extremes we can go with the things of God. We can over-value them, and misplace our trust in them - or we can fail to give them the respect they deserve, because of what they represent. For example, in one sense a Bible is just paper, print, and cowhide, but in another sense it's a sacred book. Don't turn your Bible into an idol, but treat it with respect for what it contains. It's just my conviction, but I don't like to put any other book on top of my Bible. I think the Bible deserves the preeminence.

What are appropriate ways to respect the things of God without misplacing our faith?

ROUTE TO REVIVAL

In 7:3 Samuel addresses the nation, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." Here in a nutshell is God's route to revival.

First, *return* to the Lord with all your hearts. We need to exalt Him to His rightful place in our lives. Second, *remove* any foreign gods. Rid your life of anything that rivals your devotion to God. Third, *ready* your heart. Stir up an expectation of what God will do. Fourth, *reserve* your efforts and energies for God. Serve Him only!

Return, remove, ready, and reserve - and God will *revive* a cold heart.