

FIGTREE ANGLICAN CHURCH

Called
to follow

1 SAMUEL

LIFEGROUP STUDIES

LEADER'S NOTES | STUDIES 1-10

Study 1 - In Those Days...
The context and times of 1 Samuel

Watch this youtube clip together. <https://youtu.be/fW8amMCVAJQ>

1. Of all the people in the video, where do you think you'd find yourself?

Note in this clip there is a leader who dances first, there are then successive followers. The movement only happens because of the early followers who act as leaders for successive followers. The clip gives us opportunity in a winsome way to see that leading and following work together. The former needs the latter, and the latter is most effective as a leader because of the following it models. This clip is just a fun way for group members to share, and find their voice as they share their own reflections on how they see themselves in scenarios such as this.

Read Judges 21

1. Israel is in turmoil! Chapter 20 reports the tribes of Israel going to war against the tribe of Benjamin. How is the vow of 21:1 a final blow against the tribe of Benjamin? (v3)

A war in Israel is more than a civil war, its a family crisis on a mega scale. The nation is the extended family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (aka Israel). They are meant to preserve the family line (e.g. Deut 25:5-6) as part of a covenant responsibility. The tribe of Benjamin has now been decimated in war. Now the vow 21:1 to not intermarry with them means Benjamin stands little chance of being revived as a people.

2. Now that the war is over what is grieving the people of Israel? (v3-7)

Benjamin is cut off, the family of Israel is damaged, and now the people are caught in conundrum, between God's call to preserve the tribes, and their own vow to never give their daughters as wives. They have a real problem of what / who to follow, as they ask themselves How can we provide wives (and preserve them) when we made a promise we wouldn't marry them. The issue we will see much of in this series is emerging, as they lead and govern who will they be following?

3. Why do you think they ask the question they do in v8 (consider also v1)?

There may be a loophole. If they can find a tribe that was not present at Mizpah, then that tribe can be a source of wives without breaking the vow made at Mizpah.

- 3a. What do they resolve to do with the tribe of Jabesh Gilead? (v10-12)
Kill them, and steal their unmarried women.

- b. Explain in your own words the plan Israel has come up with to solve the problem we noted in question 2. (v11-14)

As above, having stolen the unmarried women they will be given to the Benjamites as wives. The Israelites would not have broken their Mizpah vow, the Benjamites will not be eradicated, so problem solved... unfortunately there is some significant collateral damage!

c. What's your moral assessment of the Israelite strategy?

This is utterly reprehensible! An immoral example of shuffling the deck shares (or chairs?) on the Titanic! Israel's leaders making decisions on the fly will solve various problems by significantly transgressing the law of God, through their killing and kidnapping.

4. Oh dear, not enough wives to go round! (v14) So phase two of 'make tribe Benjamin great' again is proposed. Read, understand, and discuss the plans stated in v15 -23

We follow a similar trajectory as above. Exploitation of people and apparent loopholes will be the way forward.

4a. What is your moral assessment of the strategy?

Bad to worse.

b. What is the root cause of the dilemma (contrast v17 with v18)

These people are caught between the vow they have made, and the law of God.

c. Examine v 22. What seems to be the most important value here? What is forgotten about? Who is being followed?

The leaders have chosen to uphold their own vow. One can understand a desire to do this, but it comes at the cost of following God's way, and the liberty and lives of others. Surely the right response at this point is to own that you made a foolish vow and that you must now acknowledge and humbly relinquish. They have chosen to follow themselves and not God, their honour and vow means more to them than anything else. God is not being followed, they follow themselves.

5. In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." (Judges 21:25)

a. Did Israel have a leader (s)?

Yes - see Ex 14:13-14, 19:4-6, Num 2:34, 9:15-23, Deut 1:9-18, Josh 1:1-9, Judges 1:1-2, 2:1-5, 1 Sam 8: 6-8 Israel always had a leader, The Lord. He raised up many servants and leaders, but it was always Him who was leading. Leaders like Moses were fruitful leaders who followed the Lord.

b. What was the problem?

The immediate answer is no leadership, but this is not true. Everyone was leading, and doing what seemed best. The problem was a lack of Followership. In the trouble of Judges 21, God was never called upon, nor his laws prioritised. The Leaders were leaders before they were followers, they were more committed to their leadership than their followership.

Discuss: In a world that speaks much about Leadership, what qualities do you see emerging here for effective and importantly godly leadership?

Throughout the series we will see the importance of followship as essential trait of godly leadership. As we saw in the video at the beginning of perhaps leadership is not about being the best first in line, but about being a committed next in line.

Study 2 - Corruption & Call

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-26

1. Who is Eli? (1 Samuel 1:3, 9)

Eli is Israel's priest. As priest he is the highest ranked leader of Israel of his time. We will see God lead Israel through Judges, Prophets, Priests, and Kings. Eli is revealed to quite incompetent.

2. How is Eli's leadership reflected in:

a. his sons' behaviour (2:12-17, 22-25, 29; 3.13)?

Eli is aware of his son's behaviour, he warns them, but fails to stop them. His leadership is incompetent.

b. his obedience to the commandments in Deuteronomy 6.4-12?

It would appear that Eli is not 'Hearing' God, nor loving him with all his strength. As Israel's priest he has not been responsible in his role to see that all Israel hears the Lord, and as father he has not taught his sons well.

The Blind Leading the Blind

You may have heard the saying 'Justice is blind'. This popular saying points to the fact that true justice does not discriminate. In that instance, blindness is a good thing. However, in Eli's case, his blindness is disastrous. As the leader of God's people, Eli needs to be discriminating and discerning, but he simply is not. He is unable to restrain his immoral sons, and he cannot properly perceive God's interaction with his people. Ironically, he could perceive noble Hannah's lips moving while she prayed to God, but he mistakenly condemned her as a drunk (1.12-14). He is blind both physically and spiritually. As a priest, Eli's role was to be the mediator in the relationship between God and humanity. He was to represent God in all his holiness to the people, and he was to represent the people to God by offering their sacrifices to God. If a priest failed in his role, then the relationship between God and his people would break down. Here at the beginning of 1 Samuel we see Eli and his sons failing dismally in their leadership. Eli is a blind man leading the blind. God, though, is not satisfied with the breakdown in relationship with his people. It is for this reason that he acts upon the blind leadership of Eli's house.

3. What do you notice about Eli's Sons (v12, 13-15, 17, 23-25)?

They are scoundrels. Note these men have no regard for anybody. They do not follow the Lord, they do not follow their father, they do not even follow the custom of their office. They leverage their position to steal, and to be sexually immoral. There is not sense of following or service in them.

4. How does Samuel compare to Eli and his sons (2:18, 21, 26; 3:19-21)?

Contrary to the non followers Samuel will minister 'before the Lord, under Eli' He continues to listen and to grow.

5. How does the narrative of 1 Samuel 2 prepare us thematically for what we will see in Samuel as a leader?

As above, we will see Samuel as the Leader who is the opposite of Eli's sons. He does not lead without regard, instead he ministers in the presence of God, he heads Eli (even in his incompetence), Samuel is a follower before he is a leader.

6. Considering what we observe in Samuel, what are traits that anyone who wishes to be a godly influencer would also seek to cultivate?

Discuss. Surely a capacity to follow is key, a capacity to seek God and be responsive to those in God has placed authority around them - even if those in authority demonstrate their limitations.

7. Work together to think through and list what steps you wish to take to nurture the traits you listed above?

An opportunity to brainstorm and plan. This is an opportunity for the information gathered in the study to be transformational. Leaders may wish to invite members to think through practices they would like to stop, alongside ones they might want to start. Think about a plan to nurture this. It would be wise to write it down, think about assigning a review date too.

Study 3 - Ichabod! (glory departed)

What do you think would be most dangerous about a compass that points just a degree or two off north?

This compass is close enough to be believed, yet it is not accurate. It is this close counterfeiting that is most dangerous. If a compass was 90 degrees off one would soon realise it was broken. In the passage below, the Israelites might look like they are seeking God because they bring out the ark, but they are a long way from following the Lord. It seems they are aware of His power, but have forgotten about his Glory and sovereignty as Lord - no one is following the Lord.

Read 1 Samuel 4.

1. What are the headlines? What happens?

Summarise the events. What the major events and actions.

Go back and Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10

2. How do you see the theme of Hannah's prayer at work in chapter 4?

A proud Israel who do not seek the counsel of their God are indeed humbled by their own God as they are defeated by the Philistines twice.

The Lord brings to an end the evil and incompetent house of Eli as he promised he would.

3. What is the mood at the end of chapter 4? (Think in terms of the promises to Abraham.)

Certainly low, it seems God has withdrawn. It seems the cursed side of passages like Exodus 19:5-6, and Deuteronomy 28 are playing out.

Reversal of fortunes - Hannah's prayer sets the pattern for things to come. Hannah describes the LORD as a God who reverses fortunes: bringing the mighty low and exalting

the humble. However, He does not do this randomly. He does it to preserve his relationship with His people. In the rest of 1 Samuel, keep an eye out to see whether the LORD follows this pattern.

4. Read 1 Samuel 4:3.

a. How do the Elders demonstrate an understanding of the theme of Hannah's prayer?
The Elders understand that the Lord brings victory and defeat as Hannah's prayer declared.

b. What is missing from their next actions? (v 3b - 4). What have they misunderstood about God?

Despite understanding God's sovereign power to bring defeat or victory nobody seeks the Lord. There is no prayer, no seeking of God's will by his word. Instead the ark is brought out like a kind of talisman.

c. Read verse 5-8, what do Israel and the Philistines share in common regarding the ark of the covenant?

The Israelites despite God's previous revelation reveal just how blind and deaf they have become. They demonstrate no superior understanding of God than the pagan philistines. To both these nations the ark has become some kind of talisman, lucky charm or idol. The will of Yahweh, the glory of Yahweh is ignored and unknown, to people who seek to wield the ark as it were a source of God's power for them to wield. Once more nobody seeks to follow, only command.

5. Considering the events thus far, what do you think has been missing?

The word of the Lord (4:1), despite God as always being ready to lead, to speak, no body is listening in Israel, nobody follows the Lord. We wait to see how this might change as Samuels ministry is established later.

6. What is the consequence of the death of Eli?

No longer will Israel be led by a spiritually blind leader. The house of Eli is finished. We anticipate new leadership. Eli's death and surrounding events send his daughter in law into a tragic labour. She dies in childbirth, but not before she has given her child the lamenting name, Ichabod - the glory has departed. It seems to her all is lost, yet as readers we recall the young man Samuel and anticipate something.

7. The birth of a son for the wife Phinehas was thought to be a sign of hope (v20). How does the naming of the child 'Ichabod' reflect the events of the chapter?

a. With regard to the priesthood in Eli's house?

b. With regard to how Israel has viewed God?

See comments above.

8. Return to the themes you learnt from Hannah's prayer, where did it go wrong for Israel?

Discuss. Note that much of what Hannah speaks of about God works against Israel because they are proud and don't put their trust in the God who lifts up the humble.

9. How does the 'Glory of God' fundamentally change the way we approach the God who is powerful over all things?

Consider Exodus 33:4-6, 12-23. God is not like having a powerful genie in a bottle ready to to our bidding. We approach his as the glorious and holy God, we understand we have no place in His presence, and only through our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit have we been sanctified to come to him. We must not assume that because God is good, and powerful, that God is anything less than the God of Exodus 33:4-6.

Consider exploring how this effects prayer, church, God's will, and the posture we assume before the Lord.

Study 4 - They asked...

Have you ever had a time where you sincerely regretted getting exactly what you asked for?

No wrong or right answers here just a space to share a story. Israel are about to make a request that they have been, and will be warned against.

The last of the 'Judges'

Read 1 Samuel 7:1-15

1. What are the hallmarks of Samuel's time as Israel's leader?

(Consider v2-3, v5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 17)

People returning to the Lord, and Samuel instructing them. Driving of false gods. Seeking the Lord. Priestly activity. Seeking after God, confession, following, and leadership. A continued to desire to call on God. Remembrance of God's leading, leadership done before the Lord. The image of these verses is almost unrecognisable to the people we have seen in previous chapters.

2. Recall the culture of Israel in the previous study, how have things changed?

Discuss - they are so very different from the people who were neither taught nor seemed to desire to follow the Lord.

3. What do you note about God's activity, how is it reminiscent of Exodus 14:14?

God fights for his people, he leads, he acts, they trust and follow.

4. Take a pause, what do you suppose the author wants us to understand regarding the leadership of Israel?

You may like to comment on how Samuel is different to Eli, however what is enormously evident is that God has always been the leader of His people. He has always been there, even if Israel and her human leaders were not attentive followers. The author wants us to see that God leads His people.

Read 1 Sam 8:1-9

5. Samuel is old, what is his succession plan? (v1-2)

He appoints his two sons as Israel's leader, hereditary succession.

a. Where have you seen this kind of plan fail previously? (1 sam 2:1) What is the common element?

This went very poorly for the priest Eli and his evil sons Hophni and Phineas. Hereditary succession may be a very natural process, however God's leaders need to be followers of God. As we saw throughout Judges, it is God who raised up the leaders. In common with Eli, Samuel's sons do not follow his ways, and turn to dishonest gain.

6. Samuel is old, and his sons 'don't follow his example', what is the succession plan of the elders? What are your initial feelings about the plan?

They ask Samuel to appoint a king. Their desire to be like all the other nations, seems to be contrary to their call to be holy. Israel are excited about following now, sadly they are following the wrong leaders! They are following the nations rather than God.

7. Carefully examine v6-9:

a. What was Samuel's first reactions (v6), what do you learn?

He was displeased. His reaction is to pray to the Lord, once again demonstrating his piety as a follower of God.

b. What is God's response? Recall question 4 above, what is confirmed?

God explains to Samuel, it is actually the leadership of God that has always been with his people and exercised through different agents that the people are rejecting. They are rejecting the leading of the Lord.

c. Why do you suppose God is willing to grant the request of the elders of Israel?

It would seem that the harsh consequences of appointing a King will be a suitable outcome. Perhaps getting just what they asked for will help Israel to return to the Lord.

A brand new office

In the book so far God's people have been under two different offices of leadership. The 'Priestly office' occupied by Eli, followed by the office of the Prophet' occupied by Samuel. Though he trained under Eli, Samuel's role under God is quite different, he will continue to bring God's word to bear as he judges / leads Israel. Now we are to see a third office of leadership introduced, that of King. What becomes abundantly clear throughout the book is that regardless of the office that God may choose to work through, the leader is only ever fruitful when they lead as a follower of God himself, and lead others to do likewise.

You have been warned...

Read 1 Sam 8:10-22

8. What is the repeated warning regarding a King?

The King will TAKE!

9. How is this fundamentally different to God? (Gen 1:29, Gen 12:1-3, Ex 14:14, Ex 19:4-6, Deut 1:31, Deut 4:, Josh 1:6,)

God will give! God provides! It is worth recalling the purpose of humanity at this point as expressed in the Westminster Catechism 'Glorify God and ENJOY him forever'

10. Read again v18- 20: Why do you suppose the people were so adamant about their request? What are the things they have forgotten?

The fear of the people should be acknowledged, do not forget Israel saw approx 35 000 soldiers killed in battle against the philistines back in chapter 4 and almost genocide of one of its own tribes at its own hands at the conclusion of Judges. This nation in its infancy is afraid, its looking for stability. At this point faith becomes a challenge. They must trust that God continues to lead them, perhaps their own inattentiveness to his leading has damaged their concept of his leadership even further. They are adamant because their faith in God's leading has failed. It is not uncommon that people groups want a visible leader... a leader who is like a hero. (This can really plague christians when leaders are leaned upon like heros). A visible leader may be much easier for Israel to follow than a God they must trust, and surrender themselves too. I wonder if there is also a comfort in having somebody to blame if things don't work out, of course this is speculation.

- b. Where do you think God's people can make similar mistakes with regard to leaders today?

As above, the challenge to God's people is to be able to follow leaders that have been appointed without becoming overly dependant on them. The priesthood of all believers can be damaged here. Eph 4:12 is a good reminder, christian leaders exist to equip the saints for ministry not to do all the ministry. Likewise both leaders and followers can seek rescue, find dependance / validation, in humans rather than in God.

You may discuss with your group, whose responsibility is the care of members of the chirstian community, whose responsibility is evangelism, why do can churches implode due to the moral failure of a leader. These sorts of questions will help us to consider where we place our dependence and to what magnitude.

Study 5 - The Lord's Anointed

Have you ever had an experience where your first impression of somebody was way off?

Things are not always what they seem - you can't always judge a book by its cover

Enter Saul

Read 1 Samuel 9.1 – 10.16

Town of Renown

While we may have mixed emotions about Israel's request for a king, we are still hopeful for their future. After all, God has consented to give them the king they ask for. But as God rolls out the red carpet for Israel's new king, we discover that, of all places in Israel, he comes from Gibeah of Benjamin. Judges 19 – 21 recounts how the residents of Gibeah had raped a Levite's concubine and left her to die. This appalling crime had led to a civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin was nearly annihilated. We are left wondering whether Israel's king-to-be actually has anything going for him.

Investigate

1. What makes Saul stand out from the rest of the Israelites? (9.2)

Saul's appearance is breathtaking. More handsome than any other, and a head taller. Saul had the kind of appearance that would surely cause him to stand out among others.

2. Who takes initiative during the search for the donkeys? (9.5-10)

In this strange donkey hunt, it is the servant of Saul who brings an insightful initiative. For Saul it was time to head home (an initial sign of initiative perhaps), but from then on it is the servant who is leading the would be king. The servant has a plan (an some knowledge), and though Saul as the master will grant the approval it is the servant who is leading the way here.

3. Give Saul a score out of 10 for the following qualities:

a. Determination

Best not to get bogged down in debate here, but to seek a general feel for Saul's strengths / limitations.

b. Creative thinking

c. Speaking ability

d. Ability to instruct others

4. In light of this how would you rate Saul's competency to rule as king?

There is little in this account of Saul that would cause us to think he boasted great competency to be king. He seems quite passive as things happen to him, and around him, and direct him.

5. How does Samuel seek to prepare Saul for kingship? (9:27 - 10:1)

Samuel provides essential steps. He rids Saul of distraction, he calls him to stop, he helps him to follow first. He does this by giving him a message from God. Samuel seeks to teach Saul a 'speak Lord your servant is listening' posture. This posture will be the make or break of Saul. Samuel anoints Saul. Note this is where we get the language of Christ (anointed), Saul will be Israel's Messiah or Christ - because the Lord has anointed him. Note again Saul is to lead not according to his ambition, but according to the Lord's calling. Samuel kisses Saul (see psalm 2) as a pledge of his commitment to the Lord's anointed. Surely there is some great modeling here. Samuel has been Israel's leader, now Saul will be, despite being the king maker, Samuel kisses the Lord's anointed. He follows God's leader and demonstrates a quality that will be seen again later in the book through Jonathan with David. Samuel has shown Saul in this act that God leader is not about his own kingdom but the Lord's. Finally Samuel also give Saul a scope for his authority, 'ruler over his inheritance'.

6. Why do you suppose Samuel kissed Saul? What may we learn of leadership from Samuel at this point (10:1 see also Psalm 2:11-12)

See point above

7. How do you think one can be sure of God's call to lead?

Consider how God speaks. His definitive word is in scripture. We can consider the conviction, character and competency he calls for. (1 Tim 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5 may be helpful). Further we may give consideration not just to what God says to us or lays on our heart, but what he might say to those in whom the spirit also dwells. It is dangerous ground to say 'God told me' without checking if he might have told anybody else, or to look for a confirmation from some of God's people.

We may also consider, "is anyone wanting to follow? A leader without follower is just somebody taking a walk.

You may like to show your group this question from the service of 'the making of deacons' in the anglican church. 'Do you think that you are truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the order of the Church of England in Australia to the ministry of the church?' page 605 *An Australian prayer book*.

How would you think the clergy of your church discern an answer to this question?

8. What role does the Spirit of God play in this episode? (10.6, 10)

Radical transformation! Recall your answer to questions 3-4. The Spirit of the Lord will cause Saul to 'prophecy', note this does not have to mean 'predict' it means to speak God's word in such a way that engages and even interprets current reality. What a wonderful attribute for a leader of God's people. Indeed Saul will be quite a different person from the donkey chaser we met. It is important not to let Saul's reputation as a failed king overshadow what is being revealed. Here we see the signs of the Spirit of God coming on Saul, and him getting off to a great start!

What does this tell us about effective leadership?

Effective leadership must be on track! Saul is set up for effective leadership as he is to be a follower first. (we will see it comes unstuck next study when he fails to follow). Saul is empowered by the Spirit and following God's word. Effective leadership is ineffective if it is off track. Even in a secular context if a leader who is able to powerfully lead others in the wrong direction is ineffective.

Study 6

The Lord's Rejected

Think of some famous leaders who "fell from grace"? What caused their downfall?

Often strengths can be our limitations as well. An excellent study in this phenomenon is by Garry McIntosh *Overcoming the dark side of leadership*. Leaders don't only fall from grace due to capacity limitations, but often due to character limitations that are not addressed.

Read 1 Samuel 13.1-23

Saul's Reign

We do not know exactly how old Saul was when he became king, or for how long he reigned. The Hebrew text of the Bible that we have today has lost these particular details at 1 Sam 13.1. We can, however, make some good guesses. When Samuel anoints Saul in chapter 9, he is described as a 'man'. This means that Saul was probably at least 20 years old, because 'man' usually refers to males of fighting age (over 20 years); and, after all, the elders of Israel had demanded a king who could lead them

into battle. We also know that Saul eventually had four sons, and that at least three of them were of fighting age while he was still alive (Saul also had two daughters). Thus, by chapter 13, Saul had probably been king for a little over 20 years.

1. What factors lead to Israel's fear? (13.5-7, 19-23)

The enormous capacity and technology of the philistine army. Israel was very much out gunned.

2. Do you think Saul is wise or foolish in offering the sacrifices? (13.8-13)

King and Prophet Israel was a nation that was ruled by the word of the LORD. As such, the prophet, who delivered the word of the LORD, had the most important office in the nation. Even the king was to be subject to the word of the LORD's prophet. In Deuteronomy 18.15-22, the LORD had promised to raise up a prophet like Moses to guide the nation of Israel, and the nation was to show complete obedience to the prophet's word. Although this promise ultimately finds its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus, the LORD did indeed raise up numerous prophets to bring His word to Israel. Samuel was one such prophet. For Saul, this presented a dilemma. Saul took a course of action that to him seemed perfectly logical—it made good sense. And clear, logical thinking is what any nation would want from their leader. However, Saul also had to contend with the direct word of the prophet. Thus, for Saul, we have a problem: to what extent could he himself follow his own logical instincts? How much authority did his own good ideas and commands carry? In other words, did Saul have the authority of a prophet? Was Saul also among the prophets?

Read 1 Samuel 14

3. How does Jonathan's behaviour contrast with Saul's? (14.1-7)?

Jonathon is active in battling the philistines. He seeks opportunity to carry out Israel's mission of driving out the philistines, and he does this by seeking God leading v6-10. Jonathon does this with just his armour bearer, trusting in the Lord. Saul on the other hand reclines under the pomegranate tree with an army of 600 men, and a priest wearing the ephod. In Saul's party there is no action, no seeking... in fact they have not even realised that Jonathon has left. These two groups are very different.

4. What is Jonathan's reasoning for his actions? What is the result? (14.6-7, 14-23)

Jonathan believes that God is leading, he is convinced that God can save by few or many. He understands God's mission, and God's capacity to lead in it. As a result Jonathan and his armour

bearer over come the philistine group, and bring panic on the whole army. As such Saul's group mobilises against the melting philistines – God saves Israel.

Urim and Thummim

We are not exactly sure what the Urim and Thummim were. We do know that they were commissioned by the LORD to be carried on the breastplate of the High Priest (Exod 28.30) and only the priests handled them for determining divine decisions (Num 27.21; Deut 33.8; Ezra 2.63). Some have thought that 'Urim and Thummim' was the term given to the twelve precious stones that were inlaid into the High Priest's breastplate (Exod 28.17-21). However, that is just a guess. It is reasonable to assume, however, that whenever an 'ephod' (the priestly garment) appears in a narrative, it is mentioned because it has the Urim and Thummim with it (1 Sam 14.3).

5. Why was Saul's vow foolish? (14.30, 32-34)

Saul's vow v24 was both physiologically and spiritually silly. The men are weekend as a result – their lack of food caused the troops to feel faint. Once again Saul's vow has demonstrated an egocentric perspective v24 demonstrates that Saul's vow related to his own vengeance. Finally the starving men are weekend in resolve, they 'pounced on the plunder' and broke God's law by eating meat with the blood still in it. The men were put in a desperate and hungry situation due to Saul's vow.

6. What does God's Law say about broken vows (Deut 5.11, 23.21-23)? How does this reflect on Saul and his vow?

See Deut 5

Read 1 Samuel 15

7. What does Samuel instruct Saul to do? Why? (15.2-3, 18)

Be God's instrument of condemnation upon the Amalekites. Attack them, spare no one, put all and everything to death, wipe them out. This is because of how the Amalekites treated Israel when they came out of Egypt. The Amalekites were standing in the way of God's saving his people.

8. Does Saul follow through on God's instructions given through Samuel? Why or why not? (15.7-9, 14-15)

No. Once again Saul has forgotten to follow. Rather than eradicate the Amalekites he concurs them and kept all that was good. Rather than acting as God's agent of judgment, Saul uses this war in an opportunistic way. This was not God's instruction.

Sacred Ban

The LORD brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to give them the land of Canaan, just as he had promised to Abraham. God gave Israel the land by pouring out his fearsome judgement on the pagan inhabitants of Canaan for their terrible sinfulness. He used Israel to do this by having them execute a 'sacred ban'—that is, God demanded that Israel devote the inhabitants to him for destruction: men, women, children and all their possessions (Deut 7).

To us today this sounds like a harsh and even criminal measure, similar to the atrocity of ethnic cleansing. However, God takes sin very seriously (compare Jesus' shocking words in Mat 5.29-30) and demanded that Israel be a holy nation—that is, an especially distinguished nation. As such, he ordered a thorough purge of sin from Israel's midst. A sacred ban was not so much 'ethnic cleansing' as 'sin cleansing'. And by annihilating absolutely everything, the LORD made sure that there was nothing left over to lead his people Israel into pagan sinfulness. Furthermore, to allow anyone or anything to survive a sacred ban was to stifle God's righteous judgement—in effect, to obstruct justice. Anyone who failed to carry out a sacred ban was guilty of obstructing justice and being in contempt of the LORD. When Israel first entered Canaan, an Israelite named Achan kept some of the spoil from a sacred ban (Josh 7). As such, he tainted all of Israel with sin and obstructed God's righteous judgement. As a consequence, the LORD's righteous judgement fell on Achan and his entire clan—in other words, the sacred ban fell on Achan and all that was his. He and his family were stoned to death and their bodies and possessions were burned.

9. With what does Saul seem to be preoccupied? (15.12, 30)

Himself, Saul sees himself now just like a king of the nations, rather than a princely ruler under God.

10. How does the LORD respond to Saul's actions? (15.10-11, 22-23, 26-28)

Robes and cloaks

In ancient time, robes and cloaks were symbols of authority (much as they are today). The High

Priest had special robes to signify his authority to act as priest. The fact that Samuel's mother made him a robe when he was a little boy was symbolic of the authority that Samuel was to have (1 Sam 2.19). When the prophet Ahijah signalled the split of the Kingdom of Israel, he symbolically tore up a new garment (1 Kgs 11.30-32). With his cloak, the prophet Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan River, and when he was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, he left his cloak behind for Elisha to carry on as his successor (2 Kgs 2.8-13). Here, in 1 Sam 15, the tearing of Samuel's robe is symbolic of the tearing away of Saul's kingdom.

Does God regret his own actions?

After Saul's failure to carry out the sacred ban on Amalek, God expresses his regret to Samuel for having made Saul king (1 Sam 15.10). However, Saul was the king that the people of Israel wanted—not whom the LORD wanted. Popularity is not a sign of God's approval. When Israel asked for a king, they rejected the LORD. Therefore, the LORD chose to give them a reject-king. The regret that the LORD expresses over Saul is, in many ways, the regret he planned to have. It is like the LORD saying, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to reject Saul." As such, Samuel is fully justified in saying that God 'is not a man, that he should have regret' (1 Sam 15.29). God had given Saul the opportunities to obey

him and so prosper as king: Samuel had written down the king's obligations and God's Spirit had come on Saul at crucial moments. However, Saul turns out to be the defiant people's defiant king. Saul had the appearance of a good king. However, appearances can be deceptive.

11. Has Saul's kingship been doomed from the start? (Consider 8.18; 10.19; 12.14-15; 13.13-14)

It would appear so, though it did not have to be. But as the kingship came from a rejection of God's leadership, and a failure to follow and obey God throughout it doomed itself.

12. At this point, how are things looking for God's people and God's promises to Abraham? (12.22; 13.14; 15.28)

God has not ceased in his plan or promise. What is evident is that the kingdom will not be advancing under Saul. God has a plan for another, and despite the current problems He remains faithful to His promises to Abraham.

13. What place do the following characteristics have in leadership?

Use what you have learnt to guide your reflections.

- a. Obedience
- b. Popularity
- c. Rationality
- d. Initiative

14. How does the picture of God seen throughout this study compare with popular perceptions of God today?

Discuss... you may talk about judgment, sovereignty, activity, faithfulness, among other things

Study 7

When Kingdoms Collide

What makes an opinion worth listening to?

Discuss... it may be that is informed, impassioned, consistent, widely held, rational, virtuous...

Read 1 Samuel 18.1 – 20.1

Investigate

1. What is the difference between David and Saul's situation? (18.12, cf. 16.13-14)

Saul may still be on the throne, and well resourced but the big difference is that God is with David and had left Saul.

2. Fill out the following table to determine the opinion that various figures have

of David.

Complete table

Passage	Who	Opinion of David For / against	Evidence of opinion
18.1-4 19.1-7	Jonathan		
18.6-7	The Women of Israel		
18.14	The Lord		
18.16	All Israel and Judah		
18.20, 28-29 19.11-17	Michal		
19.18	Samuel		
18.7-9 18.10-15 18.17, 20-29 19.9-10 19.11, 14-15	Saul		

3. How does Saul follow through with his promises?

(a) 17.25 and 18.17-19

Deceptively. He progresses with his promise as a means to further engage David in war, in order that the Philistines might kill him. He adds stipulations. When David humbly considers himself beneath the honour of the kings daughter, Saul rescinds and gives her to another.

(b) 19.6 and 19.15

He does not.

Saul's frustration

Despite numerous attempts on David's life, Saul fails to lay even a finger on David. Saul's situation is becoming increasingly desperate. Not only has David won the hearts of Israel and Judah, but those whom Saul should have been able to depend upon let him down and they

constantly foil his own plans: the LORD, Jonathan, Michal and Samuel. Saul is becoming more and more isolated as the LORD continues to frustrate him.

The Emperor's New Clothes

We saw back in chapter 13 that garments are symbols of authority. Here at the beginning of chapter 18 we see the Crown Prince Jonathan remove his own robe and armour, and give them to David. This was more than just a token of their tight friendship; it was a significant act recognising David as the future king of Israel. Jonathan was effectively abdicating his future authority as king in favour of the Lord's anointed—his friend, David.

At the end of chapter 19, Saul also disrobes and lies naked before the Lord. We have effectively returned to the situation in 10.10-12, where Samuel had anointed Saul but Saul had not been publicly acclaimed as king. Thus, yet again, Saul is a king without authority. The people's king has lost his people and now lies purely at the mercy of God.

Read 1 Samuel 20.1-42

4. Is David a loyal citizen of the kingdom?

Yes, he however is also aware of the danger his life is in.

5. How does Jonathan realise his father's intentions? (20.30-33)

Saul is going nuts. The King sees his kingdom and kingdom legacy in danger, he states his intention to kill David directly. When Jonathan appeals the King looks to kill Jonathan with a spear. Perhaps he only spoke of Jonathan's future Kingdom as a means to motivate Jonathan to protect his own. For Saul it has become 'my kingdom at all costs.'

6. What is so amazing about Jonathan's speech in 20.12-17?

David and Jonathan plan their alibi together. However, when it comes to telling the alibi to Saul, Jonathan makes a big slip up. Rather than saying that David had asked permission to hurry back to Bethlehem for the sacrifice, Jonathan says that David asked to 'get away'—that is, make his escape. It is at this point that Saul realises Jonathan is in league with David and explodes with anger, cursing his own son in no uncertain terms. Saul feels utterly betrayed. And yet, in the midst of his anger, his words make sense: as long as David is alive, Jonathan's inheritance of the throne is far from certain.

7. What is the outcome of David and Jonathan's plan? (20.41-42)

Jonathan has acknowledged David's Kingship, they have sworn friendship and Jonathan and his family will find refuge in David's house.

8. Is Jonathan a loyal citizen of the kingdom?

His Father might not think so, it may be argued that he may or may not be a loyal citizen of Saul's kingdom, however his acknowledgment of God's anointed David, even at his own loss demonstrates a loyalty to God as King of the Kingdom.

9. What do Jonathan's actions in this chapter teach us about:

- a) loyalty to friends
- b) loyalty to family
- c) loyalty to God
- d) priorities in relationships

10. Jonathan's loyalty to the Lord's anointed comes at great personal cost. What has following Christ cost you? What does Jesus have to say about the cost in Mark 10.28-30?

Study 8 - The Wandering King

Have you ever been stuck in a situation where you thought there was no way out? What happened?

Encourage members to share situation and feelings...

Read 1 Samuel 21.1 – 22.23 and 23.15-28

1. Chapters 21-23 depict David fleeing from Saul. Fill in the following table about these incidents.

You may choose to allocate different parts of the reading and table to smaller sections of the group to fill in and report back to the larger group.

Place of refuge	Who assists David?	Dilemma	Outcome
Nob (21.1)	21.4-9	21.3-6 21.7	22.9-10 22.16-23
Gath (21.10)	21.13	21.11-12	21.15 - 22.1
The Cave of Adullam (22.1)	22.1	–	22.2
Mizpeh of Moab (22.3)	22.4 22.5	22.3	22.4 22.5
Wilderness of Ziph (23.14)	23.14	23.14	23.14
Horesh (23.15)	23.16-17	23.15	23.16, 18
The Wilderness of Maon (23.24-25)	23.25	23.26	23.27-29

2. How does Saul's treatment of Nob compare with his treatment of the Amalekites? (15.15-16; 22.18-19)

Against the Lord's Anointed

In the midst of his rage against David, Saul commits a heinous crime: he has 85 anointed priests and their families killed (1 Sam 22.16-19). The scandal of this massacre is not just the loss of life, but that Saul lays his hand against men anointed to mediate the relationship between the Lord and his people. Rather than leading the nation under God, Saul has assaulted God himself by murdering his anointed ones. He has just jeopardized God's

covenant with Israel. A striking detail not to be overlooked is that Saul is held back from wiping out the Amalekites despite God condemning them, yet he does not hold back acting on his condemnation of the priests. It seems Saul is more responsive to his own concept of condemnation than God's. Once more we see the problem with Saul's capacity or willingness to follow.

What's more, Saul is now hunting another anointed one: David.

To the Rescue

Read 1 Samuel 23.1-14

3. What crisis does Keilah face? (23.1)

Philistine attack, along with stealing their produce.

4. What is David's purpose in coming to Keilah (23.2-4)? What is Saul's purpose in coming to Keilah? (23.8)

After asking God's direction, David comes with a purpose to attack the Philistines and save Keilah. Saul comes in order to besiege David!

5. How do David and Saul each relate to God in this episode? What does this tell us about relating to God?

David sees himself as servant of the Lord, he asks God's leading to serve God's mission. Saul seems to see God as Saul's servant, handing to him what he desires. This gives us a moment to think about who is Lord and who is servant, who is called to follow in our relationship with God.

6. In what ways are you like David when you relate to God? In what ways are you like Saul?

Encourage group to be vulnerable with one another, leader may need to go first. Sometimes we pray prayers we that ask God to get on board with our ideas, and empower them. Rather than seeking his leading. This can be easy to do when we feel there is much at stake, like in the time of illness, or hardship. You may choose to think about Jesus prayer in gethsemane as a wonderful example too.

Read 1 Samuel 24.1-22

8. How determined is Saul to capture David? (Compare 23.13 with 24.1-2.)

Very

9. How do David's men react when they see Saul in David's cave? (24.4)

They see this as the turning point, they interpret this as the day God has given Saul into David's hand. Note they read 'opportunity as 'affirmation' this can be problematic as we will see in 3 ways:

- Can does not always mean should. The men are in danger of slipping into the same kind of God is my servant thinking that dominates Saul. Nobody has stopped to ask God if this is his plan.

- David will sharply rebuke his men for their view on the situation. The kingdom is not to be taken it is to be given by God in God's time.

- God did not actually say 'I have given your enemy into your hands' He said, 'I am going to give the philistines into your hands'. The men have had to stretch what God has said two steps, two logical steps, but steps none the less. They have moved from 'Philistines to enemy' '- yes the Philistines are an enemy but God was specific to say Philistine and not the more generic enemy'. Secondly the men have now placed Saul in the space of enemy.' Though Saul might say David is his enemy, David does not have that view of Saul, he calls him his master and the Lord's anointed.

10. How does David treat Saul and why (24.6-13, cf. 22.17-19)?

AS above final sentence. David is revering and merciful.

11. What does Saul finally realise? (24.16-22; cf. 15.28)

David is more righteous and the Kingdom will be given to him. He realises he has treated David poorly, and David has treated him well. He does not seem however to act upon what he has realised... This only stands to confirm Saul's rebellion and sin.

12. What is the significance of David cutting Saul's robe? (See 15.27-28)

Clothing is highly symbolic in 1 Samuel. As previously this is sign of the kingdom being taken away from Saul.

13. When Jesus was crucified, the soldiers gambled for his clothing (John 19.23-24). In doing this, they unwittingly fulfilled Psalm 22.18. When it came to Jesus' tunic, the soldiers did not tear it. Although this fulfilment is widely recognised by readers of the Bible, many forget to ask what exactly is the meaning of the garments. Thinking about the role garments play in 1 Samuel, what might be the significance of the fact that Jesus' tunic remained Untorn?

Jesus, is the last Christ, he is the one who fulfills 2 sam 7, his kingdom will never be torn away. Even at crucifixion the Kingdom is not torn from him and is established eternally by his Holy Spirit anointed resurrection

14. Throughout this study we have seen various people reading God's hand into their specific circumstances (e.g. Saul at Keilah, David's men in the cave). Is it right for us to read God into our circumstances? How do David's actions in this study help us to answer this? (see also 1Thess 5.15-22, Rom 8.28-29).

Discuss based on what you have seen above, is opportunity or desire or an open door enough to discern God's will?

15. Certain Psalms are set during this part of David's life. They are Psalms 18, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63 and 142. These Psalms give us a glimpse into David's thoughts and emotions, much like diary. Read Psalm 57. What is the context of the Psalm (in the title)? What is David's attitude to God and his own enemies?

Have members look at some of the Psalms and share.

Study 9
When Kingdoms Divide

Have you ever made a “fool of yourself”? What happened?

Read 1 Samuel 25.1-44

1. What major event happens in 1 Samuel 25.1? What does this now mean for the nation of Israel?

Samuel died! Samuel has brought God's instruction to Israel, his is the one who would anoint both Saul and David. The role of 'king' was subordinate to prophet, now the prophet has died. Will Israel hear and follow.

2. How is Nabal and his wife, Abigail described? (25.3) How do they each show their character in this episode (25.9-12, 14-23)

Nabal is surely and mean, whilst Abigail is intelligent and beautiful. Examine the noted verses and see how this plays out.

3. What do Abigail's words (25.23-31) imply about:

a. The LORD?

The Lord is sovereign, he has led his kingdom

b. David?

She recognises the Lord's anointing of David and that the kingdom will be established under him. This is very much a 'kiss the son' moment.

c. Nabal?

He is wicked, and like all other 'rulers' big or small must acknowledge God's anointed.

d. Saul?

His reign is over and that God is establishing David.

4. Why is David grateful to Abigail? (25.32-34)

For her good judgment and keeping him from bloodshed. Abigail has acted to save many lives.

5. What happens after Abigail's meeting David? (25.36-42)

Think it through

God hands Nabal's empire over to David. God does the work, David sheds no blood. All that was Nabal's is now David's, and Nabal's condemnation is on his own head.

6. What significance does the phrase 'like a king' (25.36) have?

The Nabal incident is reflective of the larger narrative playing out between David and Saul. Opposing the Chosen King

David had no need to attack Nabal since God himself struck Nabal dead. Nabal had been acting 'like a king' with total contempt for David. He serves as a warning of how God will deal with those who do not acknowledge the LORD's chosen king, but rather set themselves up in opposition to him. This sounds a sombre note for Saul (26.10).

Read 1 Samuel 26.1 – 27.1

7. What obstacles does David face as he enters Saul's camp (26.5-7)?

Saul's army with Saul camped in the middle.

8. Why does David refuse to attack Saul? (26.8-11, 23-24)

As in 1 Sam 24, David will not harm the Lord's anointed, further however on this occasion David expresses that the Lord himself will strike Saul, in the Lord's time and way.

9. What is Saul's response to David when he finds out that David spared his life again (26.21)?

He confesses he has sinned. He asks David to come back, he pledges safety and says he has been wrong.

10. Was David foolish for not killing Saul?

No, his confidence is in the Lord to act.

Read 1 Samuel 27.1-12

11. Does David trust Saul's words in 26.21? How does he indicate this? (27.1-4)

No, he moves to Gath, the land of the Philistines where he knew Saul would not pursue him.

12. How does David gain the trust of Achish? (27.8-12)

David's raids were not against Philistines but against those who were a problem for Achish. Achish began to trust David and see him as a servant. David is crafty in leaving no survivors to tell of his plundering or any other details of his raids.

13. This is now the second time that David acts with apparent deceit towards the Philistines. How should we evaluate David's behavior in chapter 27? To what extent can it serve as a model for us?

We see a slightly different side of David in chapter 27. He is different from the righteous and faithful one who trusts the Lord in Chapter 26. He is crafty and as soon as his refuge was sought among the Philistine territory perhaps our sensors should have been up. Why is David doing that, is not the Lord his protector? David is clever, skilled and, crafty in chapter 27, but there is certainly a question mark over his righteousness and faithfulness now. We will see in chapters to come this question mark will be an undoing for him. Perhaps the model for us is to not place skills, and craftiness before being faithful in following. Success does not equal faithfulness, and faithfulness trumps success.

Study 10 Strength in the Lord

Name a movie where the ending didn't feel quite right. What was wrong with it?

Read 1 Samuel 28-29

1. What does the news in 28.1 mean for David (28.1-2)? How do the lords of the Philistines respond? (28.1-11)

War between Israel and the Philistines leads to David being called to join and fight alongside Achish and his army against Israel. David will have to make a decision about where his loyalties lie.

2. What does Achish understand David to be saying (29.8)? Is this what David actually means (cf. 24.8; 26.17, 19)?

Achish believes David to be pledging allegiance and promising to show his ability for him as a soldier. Therefore Achish makes him his bodyguard. It would seem not, David though he eludes Saul, is loyal to Saul and has spared his life twice.

3. What is Saul's predicament and how does he try to resolve it (28.3-8)? What light does Deuteronomy 18.9-12 shed on Saul's course of action?

He is terrified of the Philistines, he inquires of the Lord but the Lord does not answer. Saul will now break God's law in order to try and get an answer from God by contacting the dead Prophet through a medium!

4. Compare the relationship between Saul and the LORD and David and the LORD? (1 Sam 22.5; 23.4; 23.10-12; 28.6, 15; 30.8)

Saul goes to extreme measures to extract some scrap of guidance from God, but God is completely silent. This is dramatically different to God's prompt and precise answers to David's enquiries. Just when it appears that some morsel of guidance is about to come his way, Saul instead receives grave news.

5. What does the spirit of Samuel tell Saul? (28.16-19)

The Lord has turned away from you, he is your enemy. He is tearing the kingdom from you as he said he would, because you did not obey. You and Israel will be handed over to the Philistines.

6. Do you feel any sympathy for Saul and Israel? Why or why not?

The craft of mediums and necromancers involved subtle acts of trickery. It is little wonder, therefore, that the medium is shocked when the spirit of Samuel actually appears (28.12). Her response reinforces the enormity of the message. In confronting Saul Samuel pronounces that God is Saul's enemy (28.16). The Hebrew word here implies a persistent and ever-present enemy—a 'nemesis'. Samuel confirms that God has deliberately allied himself against Saul because he failed to wipe out Amalek. The Lord's unspent judgement on Amalek is diverted onto Saul. The armies of Israel are inevitably caught up in the fate of their leader.

Read 1 Samuel 30

7. Who does David defeat? How does this victory reflect on Saul?

David defeats the Amalekites. Saul's failure to eliminate the Amalekites is highlighted. Had he eliminated them, this battle would not have happened. David has recovered much of Saul's failure.

Read 1 Samuel 31

8. What is particularly tragic about this battle? (31.1-6)

At the hands of the Philistines Israel flees, and Saul's house comes to a end, including the righteous Jonathan. Saul will be forced to kill himself as a mercy killing!

9. Why do the people of Jabesh recover Saul's remains? (31.8-13, cf. 11.1-11)

Loose ends

The Israelites did not ordinarily cremate their dead. This was a custom reserved for people who breached a sacred ban (cf., Josh 7.24-25). Thus, even in death we see Saul paying the price for his failure to carry out the LORD's demands against Amalek. Ironically it is an Amalekite who takes the credit for Saul's death (2 Samuel 1.1-16). Saul's failure to fulfil his foolish vow while pursuing the Philistines (14.24-30, 36-45) revisits him. His vow in the LORD's name demanded the death of Jonathan his son but it was not carried out. Tragically the vow is fulfilled by the Philistines themselves on Mount Gilboa. King Saul, who had held court under the tamarisk tree on the height of Gibeah with spear in hand (1Sam 22.6), is laid to rest under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh (31.13).

Throughout 1 Samuel David had numerous opportunities to seize the kingship yet refused to do so. Even now with Saul dead David holds back. Instead, David mourns the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in the moving lament of 2 Samuel 1.17-27.

10. What situation does the nation of Israel now find itself in? (31.7; Compare Genesis 17.1-8)

11. What hope is there for Israel?

The LORD's anointed

More to come 1 Samuel ends on a tragic note. The king is dead, Israel's land is being over-run, they have rejected God as their king and God seems very far away. David presents a ray of hope but despite his merits he still has a flawed character. We have seen how Israel's fortunes are closely tied to its king's destiny. They need a king who is not merely popular by their standards but one who obeys God. He must be favoured by God and promote the LORD as the true king. Only with such a king will the promises of God and the hopes of Israel be fulfilled.

12. Re-read the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2.1-10). Where have you seen the reversal of fortunes in 1 Samuel?

13. In light of 1 Samuel, is it possible that God deliberately raises bad leaders and governments? (Consider Acts 4.24-30; 1 Peter 2.13-14).

Yes – he is sovereign – sometimes it takes a bad chapter to create a good story.

14. Read the following verses and note what they say about Jesus. How does Jesus compare with Saul and David as the LORD's anointed?

a. Luke 1.26-33

b. Luke 23.35-41

c. Acts 10.36-43

d. Acts 13.17-23, 32-37

e. Romans 1.1-4

f. Philippians 2.5-11

g. Revelation 19.11-16

15. In light of these passages how should the kingship of Jesus affect your thinking and your actions? Are there areas in which you need to change?