



SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY

Discipleship Plan

Third Quarter – Joshua to David
Part 2

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Lesson Five: A Mother and Her Son	Page 3
Lesson Six: A Father and His Sons	Page 4
Lesson Seven: The Shameful Use of Glory	Page 5
Lesson Eight: The Lord's Thunder vs The Shout of Men	Page 6
Review Lesson: Confronting Cultural Bias Against Miracles in the Scientific Age (Year 2, Quarter Four)	Page 7

Lesson 5: A Mother and Her Son

Primary Verses: “The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of my glory. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and He has set the world upon them.” 1 Samuel 2:6-8 (NKJV)

Teaching Text: 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

Supporting Text: Genesis 21:1-7, 25:19-21, 30:22-24; Judges 13:1-3

The Bible has been called many things, but rarely is it ever accused of being easy to read. Defining and interpreting its over-arching narrative is a multi-sided debate which is centuries old. In this sense, the Bible is like other great literary work: it generates divergent views and discussion throughout the ages. However, one can also argue there are recurring themes even casual readers will find difficult to ignore or miss. This lesson contains one such theme.

What was true of Sarai/Sarah was true of Rebecca. What was true of Rebecca was true of Rachel. What was true of Rachel was true of Samson’s mother. As a barren woman, Hannah takes her place among these mothers for her womb is soon to be blessed just as God had done for them. Even more so, her womb is blessed because she is chosen to deliver a deliverer for Israel. She will bear a man who will be used of God to promote the promises of God in that particular generation and epoch of time. The story of Hannah reminds us of man’s inability to bring about God’s will without His power.

God has chosen to preserve both His word and His ways by the means of recorded scripture. As a result, God’s faithfulness to these barren mothers of the past is a blessing to us today. Where circumstances reveal impossibility due to human frailty, divine power has no such boundaries. It is when God’s promises seem to be at greatest risk of being proven false, God’s faithfulness is all the more greatly praised for bringing to pass what was unthinkable.

Questions to Consider: Chapter one begins by naming the geographic location of our story’s starting point. Do such details really matter for us in 2016? Why or why not? What are your thoughts concerning Elkanah’s character? What does his question in 1 Samuel 1:8 tell us about his understanding of Hannah’s heart? Hannah appears to be a woman of tears...is she an immature weakling? Hannah also appears to be a woman of prayer. What makes her request so unique and intriguing? What does Eli’s false accusation against Hannah suggest about him, if anything? How does Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 set our expectations for subsequent chapters and the book of 1 Samuel as a whole?

Challenging the Class: Who do you truly trust with your deepest concerns? When life becomes unbearable, who do you totally confide in? To whom do you pour out your heart? Is it really God or someone else? When you have a great request to make of the Lord, are you confident enough to go to Him in earnest prayer? Just as importantly, are you careful to follow through on vows/promises that you make before the Lord?

Lesson 6: A Father and His Sons

Primary Verses: “And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, “Please put me in one of the priests’ places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.” 1 Samuel 2:34-36 (ESV)

Teaching Text: 1 Samuel 2:12-3:21

Supporting Text: Psalm 75, Luke 1:46-55 (emphasis vv51-53)

1 Samuel 2:11b says, “And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest.” It is hardly a coincidence verse 12 starts says, “Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.” It would be neither common nor easy to find a better example of characters in contrast. This literary device by the human author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is clearly intended to cast disfavor upon Eli’s biological sons, while preparing us to receive him as a godly and heroic figure.

Not only is there a contrast between Eli’s sons and Samuel, but we also witness a paradigm which will become more explicit in the New Testament: the priority of faith and faithfulness over ancestry and bloodline. It is interesting the “adopted son” is the one who “hears” God while the biological children don’t even hear their own father’s pleas for righteousness. Eli hears what the people are saying about his sons, but he doesn’t hear the Lord’s word concerning him and his house. Interestingly though, he can recognize God speaking through Samuel. In 1 Samuel 2:18-20, we find verses which appear to be inordinately interested in Samuel’s clothing. But immediately after, we find Eli’s sons engaging in sexual immorality with women who were to serve in the temple—they are *disrobed*.

In our reading, we find a “man of God” coming to Eli with a very direct message. It is not a message of healing, wholeness, and wealth. But, rather of rebuke as was common among the Lord’s people in those days as prophets did not only come with words of comfort. Isn’t it strange we don’t hear more of the same from so-called “prophets” today? This man of God is not vague in his communication, but speaks as such his words can be found true or false, subjecting himself, and his ministry, to the standard set in Deuteronomy 18:19-22. No wonder so many today have such hazy “revelations!”

Questions to Consider: There are several details contained in the first three chapters concerning location, clothing, and activities of the main characters. When interpreting biblical text, how do we detect important clues and nuances without inventing new meaning, unintended by the Author? How do you perceive Eli in this story? Is he a sympathetic or a pathetic character? Why is the “man of God” unnamed though we are given the names of persons like Peninah and others?

Challenging the Class: One of the contrasts is the rebuke Eli gives his sons versus the rebuke he receives from the man of God. Consider the value of godly rebuke and be thankful for vessels that carry it!

Lesson 7: The Shameful Use of Glory

Primary Verses: “Why did the LORD bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD’S covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.’ So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli’s two sons, Hophi and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. When the ark of the LORD’S covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook.” 1 Samuel 4:3-5 (NIV)

Teaching Text: 1 Samuel 4

Supporting Text: 1 Samuel 2:22-36

According to Men’s Fitness Magazine, certain sports professionals have extraordinary faith that certain practices promote success in their athletic endeavors. Did you know...

- 12-Time All-Star baseball player, Wade Boggs, attributed his success to eating chicken before every meal? He also insisted on batting practice every day at 5:17am and running sprints at 7:17am to continue his winning ways.
- Patrick Roy is widely considered to be the greatest goalie in the history of the National Hockey League. He was known, and ridiculed, for continuing conversations with the net and poles he guarded. To begin each game, he would also skate backward toward the goal to take his position. He believed doing so actually shrunk the goal, thus making it easier to guard!
- Serena Williams is among the greatest female tennis players of all time. Secrets to her success? She insists on wearing the same socks during each game of a tournament run. Also, she religiously bounces the ball five times before her first serve and twice before her second.
- On his way to five MVPs and six NBA championships, in every game, Michael Jordan would wear his North Carolina Tar Heel shorts under his uniform. He began wearing longer shorts to cover up his college shorts...and now you know how the trend started.

Superstitions can be cute and quirky, but in the case of Israel, under ungodly leadership, superstitions can get you killed. Tragically, the very men who were to foster holiness in Israel led the way—not in revering God—but in using the Ark of the Covenant as a lucky charm. They would soon discover the mere proximity to holy objects does not make one holy. God refused to be trivialized as a mere object for human success in *those* days, and the God in scripture always remains the same.

Questions to Consider: How many parallels can you find between the battle described in 1 Samuel 4 and the Battle of Jericho in Joshua 7? Is it possible this defeat happened because of a foolish hope that the “battle plan” for Jericho could be revisited without divine guidance? Why or why not?

Challenging the Class: This scripture passage teaches us a frightening but sober lesson: spiritual excitement is not certain proof of authentic relationship, blessing, or even the presence of God. No Christian should settle for the fool’s gold of spirited worship that is not Spirit-filled worship.

Lesson 8: The Lord's Thunder Vs. The Shout of Men

Primary Verses: “And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Astaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the LORD only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.” Joshua 5:9-11 (KJV)

Teaching Text: 1 Samuel 7

Supporting Text: 1 Samuel 4; Hebrews 11:30-34

Chapters 5 and 6 of 1 Samuel make God's testimony plain: He lowers His standards for no one. Whether a man or nation finds themselves in covenant with Him or not, there are things He simply will not compromise. His honor and holiness are never up for debate, discussion, or dispute. God is “set in His ways,” not because He is stubborn or obstinate, but because His ways are perfect. When the scriptures speak of God “repenting,” it is in reference to a course of action or perhaps alluding to an emotional grieving in His heart. But at the core of His character, change is impossible for the infinitely impeccable and immaculate God of Israel.

But this truth underscores the centrality of heart-change for us. As members of a fallen species in Adam, we are the ones for whom repentance is required. Repentance is not like TV-screens in the headrest of a vehicle. Repentance is more like a steering wheel—not an option but a standard feature for the Christian life. As long as God-lovers remain in the flesh, we will need enablement to change direction away from sin and towards a holy but patient God Who calls us away from worthless idols because He is compassionate and full of grace and truth.

As a man who loved God, Samuel knew Israel's future was in peril apart from acquiring a truly penitent heart. More than mere relief God “let us off the hook” again, true contrition sees past one's benefit to see the cost of forgiveness. Samuel intuitively understood the symbolism of substitutionary sacrifice. He knew the nation had already violated God's word concerning idolatry (Exodus 20:1-5) and was basically begging for the curses of Deuteronomy 27:15-26—daring God to make good on His threat to eject His people from His land (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Samuel's intercession and sacrifice of that lamb prefigured the work of Christ on the cross. Certainly, if Samuel called for repentance and faith for his minor sacrifice, how could the sacrifice of Christ—which does so much more—call for any less?

Questions to Consider: What does it mean to “lament after the LORD?” How many roles does Samuel have? Samuel called upon the nation to put away their idols and serve God only. Was this call external, internal, or both? Would God have “thundered” against the Philistines if Israel had not repented?

Challenging the Class: Compare the work of God's deliverance from the Philistines in this lesson with the shouting in 1 Samuel 4. Consider how much more God's shout matters more than ours. This idea is especially true concerning the preached word of God. When you hear preaching, do you perceive God shouting?

Review Lesson: Confronting Cultural Bias Against Miracles in the Scientific Age

Primary Verses: Psalm 77:11-12, "I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all your work, and talk of your deeds." (NKJV)

Teaching Text: 1 Samuel 5 and 6

Supporting Text: 1 Samuel 4

The physical universe is bound by certain laws that humans have discovered, not invented. We understand, through science, there are long-standing realities that can be studied and used to our advantage, but never really changed by any natural means. However, since we believe that God is a super-natural being and the Owner of all that exists, He has the right and ability to interact with His creation as He pleases. Whenever we find God altering the natural processes that He has put in place, we recognize His hand at work and call it a *miracle*.

Cultural Bias is the name given to the tendency of individuals in a given society to use their culture as the standard by which they should judge other societies, generations, or people groups. For example, persons who are accustomed to flipping a switch for light in a room may make generalizations about people who need to light candles or add gas to a lamp. Perhaps someone who reads left to right (as in English) thinks it's strange that people read from right to left (like Arabic). Extreme cases of cultural bias are evident when one group looks with disfavor upon other cultures simply for being different.

What is commonly referred to as the 'holiday season' is now upon us. The trappings of a holiday such as Christmas, which many believers in Christ celebrate, is very much welcomed, even in the homes of unbelievers. However, when Christians begin to expound on the spiritual significance of biblical doctrines that are commemorated on December 25th, we are met with disdain for the miraculous nature of the events we celebrate. The world would have us to believe that only the unscientific, technologically primitive, and superstitious people of the ancient world could believe in miracles. Why? Because the Age of Science has made it possible to "explain away" any reasons to believe them, of course (or so they would have us think!).

Questions to Consider: Why was the Ark of the Covenant in the land of the Philistines? How do you think the Philistines looked at the fact that they had captured the Ark? What would that have meant to them? When we consider the events in Ashdod and Ekron, what should we conclude about 1) the relationship of God and Dagon and 2) the need of Israelites to "guard" the Ark of the Covenant? How could the Philistines continue to serve Dagon in light of all they had witnessed? Are there any lessons we could learn or conclusions we should draw from their devotion to their god? What was the meaning of the plan devised by the priests in 1 Samuel 6:7-8? How does 1 Samuel 6:9 help us understand the thinking of men in those days? How is that verse helpful to us today with our view of how ancient man understood miracles?

Challenging the Class: The Christmas season presents an awesome opportunity to interact with non-believers, who are generally open to the message of "peace on earth and good will to men." But what are you doing to prepare yourself for conversations where objections to the Christian faith may pop up? While the culture and times we live in continues to grow colder towards the things of God, **Christmas** remains a relatively welcoming time to talk about *Christ*! Christians have an obligation to steward the time and open doors given to us by the nature of the Christmas season. Are you asking God to open up occasions for evangelism within your circle of family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances? You should be!