EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults

1 Samuel

Leader Guide (CSB)

Winter 2026-27



© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

EVERYTHING WE NEED

If you're the product of a certain generation, you may remember the card catalog at your local library. While students today can find information at the click of a button or the tap of a screen, not that long ago we relied on the catalog's line of drawers and rows of cards to locate our research material. It was organized according to the Dewey Decimal System, but it had everything we needed.

It's helpful to have one resource that covers a variety of topics. While the card catalog took some time to navigate, it saved us time in the long run. It held the key to just about any subject we could image. From sports to history to geography to biographies to fiction to poetry, it was all there.

In a sense, the book of 1 Samuel is like a card catalog for learning God's perspective on life. Like an encyclopedia of His work in the world, 1 Samuel offers lessons on prayer, leadership, conflict resolution, faithfulness, courage, friendship, integrity, and so much more. Through the lives of individuals like Hannah, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David, we get a broad picture of what God expects of His people—and what happens when things go wrong.

Best of all, 1 Samuel points readers toward the Messiah, the promised One who would come to redeem people from their sins. The Messiah would be a descendant of David: Jesus Christ. We all need Jesus to bridge the gap between ourselves and holy God. He is our only hope for salvation. If you've never made the decision to follow Jesus, there is no better time than right now! Here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

CONTENTS



FEATURES

- Meet the Writers 4
- From the Team Leader 5
- Leadership Training 6
- Word Wise 8
- Bible Reading Plan 9
- Using This Guide 10
- Biblical Background 12
- Outline 14
- Leader Pack Ideas 151
- Coming Next Quarter 154

SESSIONS

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF			
Dec. 6	Session 1:	**Prayer** (1 Sam. 1:9-18,24-28)	15
Dec. 13	Session 2:	**Calling** (1 Sam. 3:1-14)	25
Dec. 20	Session 3:	**Savior*** (Luke 2:8-20)	35
Dec. 27	Session 4:	**Supremacy** (1 Sam. 5:1-10; 6:13-15,19-20)	45
Jan. 3	Session 5:	**King Demanded** (1 Sam. 8:1-9,19-22)	55
Jan. 10	Session 6:	**Obedience** (1 Sam. 15:7-23)	65
Jan. 17	Session 7:	**Valued** (Ps. 139:1-10,13-16,23-24)	77
Jan. 24	Session 8:	**Anointed** (1 Sam. 16:1-13)	89
	Article:	Anointing in the Bible	99
Jan. 31	Session 9:	**Victory** (1 Sam. 17:32-47)	101
Feb. 7	Session 10:	**Friendship** (1 Sam. 18:1-9; 20:35-42)	111
Feb. 14	Session 11:	**Respect** (1 Sam. 24:1-11,16-20)	121
Feb. 21	Session 12:	**Discernment** (1 Sam. 25:14-19,29-35)	131
Feb. 28	Session 13:	**Guidance** (1 Sam. 30:1-8,21-25)	141

*Evangelistic Emphasis

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

MEET **THE WRITERS**



Sam Crouch wrote the Leader Guide commentary for 1 Samuel. Sam is a graduate of Baylor University (B.S.) and Southwestern Seminary (M.Div., D.Min.). He is retired after 52 years in full-time ministry as a writer, editor, and pastor. He and his wife, Jan, live in Tucson, Arizona.

Bill Craig wrote the group plans for sessions 1-7 in 1 Samuel. Bill is retired from Lifeway Christian Resources, where he served for 35 years, including as Vice President of Publishing and Ministry Experience. He holds degrees from the University of Miami (B.A.) and Southern Seminary (M.A.R.E., Ed.D.). Bill is a member of The Glade Church in Mount Juliet, Tennessee.

Kima Jude wrote the group plans for sessions 8-13 in 1 Samuel. Kima is a member of The Oaks Baptist Church in Grand Prairie, Texas, where her husband, Barry, serves as lead pastor. She leads the church's women's ministry and has worked for several years in higher education. Kima has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Marshall University in West Virginia.

Explore the Bible: Adult Leader Guide CSB (ISSN 1930-5877; Item 005075122) is published quarterly by Lifeway, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100 Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ryan Blackwell, President, © 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher.

For ordering or inquiries including Autoship, visit Lifeway.com, call 1-800-458-2772, write Lifeway Resources Customer Service, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, or fax 615.251.5933. For address changes, email subscribe@lifeway.com. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, visit Lifeway.com/Autoship, email orderentry@Lifeway.com, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit Lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

The suggestions in this resource for pronouncing Bible names are from *That's Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* by W. Murray Severance, © 1997 by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Used by permission.

Explore the Bible
Adult Leader Guide
Winter 2026-27
Volume 4, Number 2

Amber Vaden
Team Leader

Bob Bunn
Content Editor

Gianetta Thornburg
Production Editor

Darin Clark
Design Team Leader

Hailey Gaar
Graphic Designer

Dwayne McCrary
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

John Paul Basham
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to
the team by email:
ETB.adults@lifeway.com;
or by mail to
Explore the Bible:
Leader Guide,
200 Powell Place, Suite 100,
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

Printed in the United States
of America

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

A WORD FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

I don't know about you, but I like having and following a plan. Knowing what to expect and when to expect it fills me with comfort. Life doesn't always cooperate, though. Plans change. Circumstances shift. When the unexpected happens, flexibility is key.

In 1 Samuel, we learn about God's plans for David. Surely God's purposes were far beyond anything David would have imagined for himself. In 1 Samuel 16, God instructed Samuel to travel to Bethlehem, visit Jesse's house, and anoint the one who would succeed Saul as king. God chose David, Jesse's youngest son and a humble shepherd, to lead Israel. Samuel anointed David, but the next part of God's plan was anything but conventional. David spent many years running from Saul and waiting for the day he would be installed as king. These years were filled with unforeseen and unwanted experiences that would test David's character. Still, God's purposes would come to fruition.

Whether you're enjoying a season of calm or learning to trust God with the unexpected, I hope this quarter of study brings you closer to Him. We can depend on His plans even when we don't have all the details. God is both trustworthy and good! "There is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, as all we have heard confirms" (2 Sam. 7:22b).

In Him,

Amber Vaden

amber.vaden@lifeway.com

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

Moving People Forward in Their Faith

G. Dwayne McCrary

Imagine a novice hiker setting out on a trail that leads to a mountain summit. The trail starts wide, but as the hiker ascends, it becomes steeper, rocky, and hidden under early-season snow. At a fork in the path, he realizes the hike is more than he can handle. What he needs is a seasoned hiker who has climbed up this path before—an experienced hiker to walk alongside the novice, give tips and warnings of loose rocks, and encourage every step.

Jesus taught as He walked with people, asking probing and personal questions, clearing up misunderstandings, and offering an example of what it looks like to follow.

Today, helping others grow in faith means following that same pattern: getting personal, making it practical, and setting an example.

GETTING PERSONAL

The experienced hiker would need to engage with the novice hiker to keep both of them moving. He could not ignore the novice or view him as an obstacle in his way. As group leaders, we have a list of people assigned to us, and we must see them as the sheep we are called to lead, including novices to the group or those who rarely attend. To shepherd these individuals well, we must get to know them, which requires intentionally engaging with them. We can invite them to tell their stories, listening and making mental notes of clues about their spiritual journey and needs. This requires us to visit with them outside the normal group time. We may need to keep a notebook (digital or paper) to record important tidbits so we can be better shepherds.

We might look at our assigned ministry list and conclude there are too many names to get to know everyone personally. We can organize our classes so others can carry that load, but ultimately, those in our groups expect us to know them on a personal level. If we can't do that, we may need to consider enlisting an apprentice so we can create two smaller groups to better serve everyone.

MAKING IT PRACTICAL

Remember our hikers? The novice hiker required the help of the experienced hiker to teach him what he needed to know and how to put it into practice so they could both reach the summit safely. Application was the point. The experienced hiker could share information about the mountain, intriguing stories about others who

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources





had gotten lost on the trail but survived in a cave overnight, or details about the reasons some rocks are more treacherous than others. But what the novice hiker needed were practical actions.

We can approach teaching as an opportunity to dazzle with our knowledge or to help those in our groups put into practice critical spiritual principles. Encouraging some basic spiritual disciplines, such as biblically informed prayer and daily Bible reading, could be a start. We can provide resources and tools to help them with these disciplines, showing them how to use those resources and tools so they can pray and read the Bible for themselves.

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

The experienced hiker needed to show the novice where to step and where not to, setting an example. As teachers, our lives may be more important to those in our groups than what we say when we teach. We set the standard by sharing our lives with them. We can share the challenges we have faced and those we are navigating now. We can show them what it looks like to fail, find forgiveness in the gospel, and take the next step back onto the path.

Following Jesus is not always easy, and we need to be honest about the challenges. The challenging days may be the most fruitful for showing others what it looks like to follow Jesus regardless.

G. Dwayne McCrary is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

WORD **WISE**

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Abigail [AB ih gayl]—wife of Nabal; after Nabal's death, wife of David (1 Sam. 25:14,32-35)

Abijah [uh BIGH juh]—the second son of Samuel and brother of Joel; his wickedness as judge led Israel to demand a king (1 Sam. 8:1-5)

Agag [AY gag]—king of the Amalekites; his life was spared by Saul (1 Sam. 15:7-8)

Ahinoam [uh HIN oh am]—one of David's two wives (1 Sam. 30:5)

Amalekites [uh MAL uh kights]—a nomadic tribe that God commanded Saul to completely destroy due to their atrocities, but Saul disobeyed (1 Sam. 15:2-3)

Ashdod [ASH dahd]—one of the five principal cities of the Philistines

Beth-shemesh [beth-SHEM mesh]—a city situated in the buffer zone between the Philistines and the Israelites during the period of the judges

Dagon [DAY gahn]—a pagan god associated with the Philistines; it was toppled over before the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 5:1-7)

Eli [EE ligh]—the priest of Shiloh who became the custodian of the child Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24-25)

Eliab [ih LIGH ab] (16:6)—Jesse's eldest son; oldest brother of David (1 Sam. 16:6)

En-gedi [en-GED ih]—wilderness area where David hid in a cave and cut off a piece of Saul's robe (1 Sam. 23:29)

Gilgal [GIL gal]—one of three towns where Samuel annually held circuit court; where Saul was both crowned and rejected as king (1 Sam. 7:16; 11:14-15; 13:14-15)

Hannah [HAN uh]—mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:2)

Jesse [JESS ih]—grandson of Boaz and Ruth; father of David (1 Sam. 16:1)

Joel [JOH el]—firstborn son of Samuel and brother of Abijah; he became a wicked judge, prompting Israel's leaders to ask for a king (1 Sam. 8:1-5)

Nabal [NAY buhl]—personal name meaning "fool"; in a drunken state insulted King David (1 Sam. 25:14)

Ramah [RAY muh]—birthplace and home of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11; 8:4)

Shiloh [SHIGH loh]—place where Hannah vowed that if God gave her a son, she would give him back to God; after Samuel's birth, she brought him here, where Samuel lived under Eli's care (1 Sam. 1)

Ziklag [ZIK lag]—town given to David by Achish, king of Gath; David made this his headquarters before he became king (1 Sam. 30:1)

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

BIBLE READING **PLAN**

DECEMBER

- ❑ 1. 1 Samuel 1:1-8
- ❑ 2. 1 Samuel 1:9-18
- ❑ 3. 1 Samuel 1:19-28
- ❑ 4. 1 Samuel 2:1-11
- ❑ 5. 1 Samuel 2:12-20
- ❑ 6. 1 Samuel 2:21-26
- ❑ 7. 1 Samuel 2:27-36
- ❑ 8. 1 Samuel 3:1-10
- ❑ 9. 1 Samuel 3:11-21
- ❑ 10. 1 Samuel 4:1-11
- ❑ 11. 1 Samuel 4:12-22
- ❑ 12. 1 Samuel 5:1-5
- ❑ 13. 1 Samuel 5:6-12
- ❑ 14. 1 Samuel 6:1-9
- ❑ 15. 1 Samuel 6:10-21
- ❑ 16. 1 Samuel 7:1-8
- ❑ 17. 1 Samuel 7:9-17
- ❑ 18. 1 Samuel 8:1-9
- ❑ 19. 1 Samuel 8:10-22
- ❑ 20. 1 Samuel 9:1-9
- ❑ 21. 1 Samuel 9:10-18
- ❑ 22. 1 Samuel 9:19-27
- ❑ 23. 1 Samuel 10:1-8
- ❑ 24. 1 Samuel 10:9-16
- ❑ 25. 1 Samuel 10:17-27
- ❑ 26. 1 Samuel 11:1-11
- ❑ 27. 1 Samuel 11:12-15
- ❑ 28. 1 Samuel 12:1-7
- ❑ 29. 1 Samuel 12:8-15
- ❑ 30. 1 Samuel 12:16-25
- ❑ 31. 1 Samuel 13:1-9

JANUARY

- ❑ 1. 1 Samuel 13:10-15
- ❑ 2. 1 Samuel 13:16-23
- ❑ 3. 1 Samuel 14:1-7
- ❑ 4. 1 Samuel 14:8-14
- ❑ 5. 1 Samuel 14:15-23
- ❑ 6. 1 Samuel 14:24-35
- ❑ 7. 1 Samuel 14:36-46
- ❑ 8. 1 Samuel 14:47-52
- ❑ 9. 1 Samuel 15:1-9
- ❑ 10. 1 Samuel 15:10-19
- ❑ 11. 1 Samuel 15:20-29
- ❑ 12. 1 Samuel 15:30-35
- ❑ 13. 1 Samuel 16:1-13
- ❑ 14. 1 Samuel 16:14-23
- ❑ 15. 1 Samuel 17:1-11
- ❑ 16. 1 Samuel 17:12-24
- ❑ 17. 1 Samuel 17:25-33
- ❑ 18. 1 Samuel 17:34-47
- ❑ 19. 1 Samuel 17:48-58
- ❑ 20. 1 Samuel 18:1-9
- ❑ 21. 1 Samuel 18:10-19
- ❑ 22. 1 Samuel 18:20-30
- ❑ 23. 1 Samuel 19:1-8
- ❑ 24. 1 Samuel 19:9-18
- ❑ 25. 1 Samuel 19:19-24
- ❑ 26. 1 Samuel 20:1-9
- ❑ 27. 1 Samuel 20:10-15
- ❑ 28. 1 Samuel 20:16-23
- ❑ 29. 1 Samuel 20:24-34
- ❑ 30. 1 Samuel 20:35-42
- ❑ 31. 1 Samuel 21:1-9

FEBRUARY

- ❑ 1. 1 Samuel 21:10-15
- ❑ 2. 1 Samuel 22:1-10
- ❑ 3. 1 Samuel 22:11-23
- ❑ 4. 1 Samuel 23:1-11
- ❑ 5. 1 Samuel 23:12-18
- ❑ 6. 1 Samuel 23:19-29
- ❑ 7. 1 Samuel 24:1-7
- ❑ 8. 1 Samuel 24:8-13
- ❑ 9. 1 Samuel 24:14-22
- ❑ 10. 1 Samuel 25:1-13
- ❑ 11. 1 Samuel 25:14-22
- ❑ 12. 1 Samuel 25:23-31
- ❑ 13. 1 Samuel 25:32-38
- ❑ 14. 1 Samuel 25:39-44
- ❑ 15. 1 Samuel 26:1-7
- ❑ 16. 1 Samuel 26:8-17
- ❑ 17. 1 Samuel 26:18-25
- ❑ 18. 1 Samuel 27:1-12
- ❑ 19. 1 Samuel 28:1-7
- ❑ 20. 1 Samuel 28:8-15
- ❑ 21. 1 Samuel 28:16-25
- ❑ 22. 1 Samuel 29:1-7
- ❑ 23. 1 Samuel 29:8-11
- ❑ 24. 1 Samuel 30:1-10
- ❑ 25. 1 Samuel 30:11-20
- ❑ 26. 1 Samuel 30:21-31
- ❑ 27. 1 Samuel 31:1-6
- ❑ 28. 1 Samuel 31:7-13

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

USING THIS GUIDE TO LEAD



BEFORE THE GROUP TIME

1. STUDY THE CORE PASSAGE.

Prepare early. Read the passage, listing key people, places, words, phrases, and actions. Use the commentary included in the ***Explore the Bible Leader Guide*** and the ***Explore the Bible Adult Commentary*** to dig deeper into the items you listed. If a QR code is available in a lesson, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage. Write a summary of the session's main idea. Use the statement printed under each session title as a starting place.

2. READ THE GROUP TIME PLAN.

Study the Group Plans in the ***Explore the Bible Leader Guide***, which include ideas for integrating the ***Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide***. Page numbers for related PSG content are provided in the Group Plans. These page numbers correspond to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group. Identify ways to engage adults, explore the text, summarize the lesson, and challenge the group.

For additional ideas or questions, consult ***Explore the Bible QuickSource*** and ***Explore the Bible Extra*** (which identifies a current event to introduce and conclude the lesson and is found at goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).

Review the items available in the ***Explore the Bible Leader Pack***. Look at the Lifeway Sunday School blog and Groups Ministry blog for additional helps on leading an ongoing Bible study group.

3. GATHER AND REVIEW.

Review the group plan and options again and collect any supplies you will need. Make sure you have additional copies of the ***Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*** for guests.

DURING THE GROUP TIME

4. ARRIVE EARLY.

Make sure you are the first person to arrive. Pray as you set up the area. Greet adults as they arrive and focus their attention on the Bible study.

5. LEAD THE GROUP IN A TIME OF BIBLE STUDY.

Use the plan, recording notes of how the group responded. Remember, every group experience takes a few unexpected twists and turns, so be flexible.

AFTER THE GROUP TIME

6. EVALUATE AND RECORD.

Review and implement the After the Session idea to encourage the group to put the truths they discovered into practice. Record prayer requests and other insights you gained about the group and specific participants. Use these notes to help you grow as a leader.

7. START PREPARING TO LEAD THE NEXT GROUP TIME.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

MEETING THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE FAMILY
OF ADULT RESOURCES

CORE RESOURCES

Use the ***Daily Discipleship Guide*** or ***Personal Study Guide*** and ***Leader Guide*** as the core resource for your group.

Daily Discipleship Guide

Resource for both the group members and the group leader. An alternative to the ***Personal Study Guide/Leader Guide*** model. Includes key words, commentary and questions for the group, daily Bible readings for personal study after the group time, and ideas for smaller groups to discuss the study. Leader helps with targeted teaching plans included in the back.

Personal Study Guide

Resource for the group members to help them prepare for and study during the group time.

Leader Guide

Resource for leaders of groups using the ***Personal Study Guide***. Includes commentary and group teaching plans.

ADDITIONAL LEADER HELPS

Commentary

Provides additional insight into the passages studied.

QuickSource

Resource for leaders, providing additional discussion questions, an object lesson, and dig deeper feature. Also provides ease of use for an individual called on to step in and lead the group on short notice.

Leader Pack

Resource filled with posters, masters for informative handouts, and access to a digital leader pack (includes DOC files of the ***Leader Guide*** commentary, group plans, the pack items in PDF format, and other helps for the leader).



Find out more or order at **goExploreTheBible.com**

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

BIBLICAL **BACKGROUND**

FIRST SAMUEL

Holy Scripture is the story of God's redemption, beginning with humanity's fall into sin and the promise of the redeeming Messiah in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15). That story continued with the choosing of Abraham to give rise to a nation from which that Messiah would come, specifically Israel.

Much of the Old Testament chronicles the ups and downs of the Israelites (Abraham's offspring) as they struggled to play their part in God's redemptive story. The whole of biblical history culminates in the coming of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, which God the Father ordained before the creation of the world. After living a perfect life, Jesus became the "Lamb of God," fulfilling the ancient sacrificial requirements by dying for the sins of all people.

First Samuel records one season of the Bible's redemption story, describing a time of transition in the lives of God's people. This book, along with its companion volumes, recounts the shift from the leadership of judges and priests to the reigns of royalty over the Jewish people.

Initially, this book was a part of a larger work, sometimes called "the Kingdoms." This four-volume collection included 1 and 2 Samuel, along with 1 and 2 Kings. When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Greek Septuagint during the third and second centuries BC, this huge historical book was divided into two works, Samuel and Kings. Later translations divided them even further to the four books we have now.

AUTHORSHIP

While 1 Samuel itself does not name an author, other biblical texts suggest that it could have been the work of multiple writers. For example, 1 Chronicles 29:29 states, "As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, note that they are written in the Events of the Seer Samuel, the Events of the Prophet Nathan, and the Events of the Seer Gad." Most conservative Bible scholars believe these books represent a compilation of Samuel and the prophets (or seers) Nathan and Gad.

DATE

Scholarly dating for the books of 1 and 2 Samuel varies widely. Some experts see the books as having been written very soon after the time of David, who died around 970 BC. These scholars place the writing of 1 Samuel around 950 BC.

Other scholars lean toward a much later date for 1 Samuel. They believe the stories were compiled during the Babylonian exile. Jerusalem finally fell to Babylon in 586 BC, so this would put the date for 1 Samuel as sometime in the middle of the sixth century BC.

STRUCTURE

The book of 1 Samuel readily divides itself into these three major sections:

The leadership of Samuel (1:1–7:17). In this section we read the story of Samuel's gracious birth. God heard the prayers of a childless woman named Hannah and blessed her with a son. Hannah eventually dedicated her son to the Lord, allowing him to live with and learn from Eli, the high priest. Readers also learn about the failings of Eli and his wicked sons.

However, God did not abandon His people. Instead, the young boy Samuel matured into a respected judge of the nation and a prophet of God. Politically, this section is marked by Israel's ongoing conflict with the Philistines, a powerful Canaanite enemy living primarily along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The rise and fall of Saul (8:1–15:35). This middle section of 1 Samuel details the transition of Israel from being a theocratic nation under the direct rule of God to a monarchy led by a human leader. Desiring to be like surrounding nations, the people asked

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

Samuel to appoint a king to reign over them. Although Samuel was reluctant to do so, God instructed him to follow their wishes.

These chapters chronicle the promise of Saul as a leader who began well. However, his leadership quickly devolved thanks to arrogance and disobedience. His utter failure to live up to his potential is emphasized throughout these chapters. Despite physically standing head and shoulders above his contemporaries, Saul provided a cautionary tale of spiritual compromise. His shallow commitment to the Lord resulted in continual rebellion against the One who chose Him.

The Ascension of David (16:1–31:13). The last chapters of 1 Samuel cover the ten-year period where the nation moved from Saul's leadership to the reign of David. After prolonged disobedience on the part of Saul, the Lord rejected him as king over Israel. David was God's new choice for king, so He sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint this youngest son of Jesse.

However, the road to the throne was a rocky one. Knowing God's plan for David, Saul attempted to thwart the divine agenda in his own power. David, who had been a loyal servant of Saul and a close friend of Saul's son, Jonathan, was forced to flee and hide from Saul, who was determined to kill him. The book of 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul and his sons at the hands of the Philistines, opening the door for David's ascension to the throne of Israel.

PURPOSE

As noted, 1 Samuel highlights the shift from the period of the judges to the era of kings in Israel's history and in God's story of redemption. The book recounts the story of Israel moving from a theocracy with God as King to a monarchy where earthly kings ruled under the authority of the Lord.

In addition, the book establishes the royal lineage of God's coming Messiah. The first glimpse of this lineage is seen in the last chapter of Ruth, which is set in the time of the judges. Ruth and her husband Boaz had a son who became the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:17). First and Second Samuel pick up the story of that lineage and carry it through to David's son, Solomon. These books continue tracing the line of God's redemption that is found throughout the Old Testament.

MAJOR THEMES

Government transition. First Samuel describes the major shift in Israel from a theocracy with localized judges giving leadership to individual tribes to a national monarchy exerting central rule over all the tribes. This centralized government would last through the kingdoms of Saul, David, and Solomon, but it later dissolved with the splintering of Israel into two separate, and often antagonistic, kingdoms: Israel (or Samaria) in the north and Judah in the south.

Seeking godly leadership. First Samuel introduces readers to a series of inept and wicked leaders, including Eli and his sons, the sons of Samuel, and Saul. However, the book's writer(s) also paid special attention to a pair of godly leaders: Samuel and David. While the former group provides a warning against sin and rebellion against the Lord, the latter group offers solid examples for trusting God and following His directions.

God's amazing grace. One refreshing theme in 1 Samuel is God's grace in using people who might seem unworthy. For example, God used barren Hannah in His plan. He also used a young lad named Samuel to lead His people.

At his best, Saul was a humble young man with great potential. Meanwhile, David was almost an afterthought within his own family. Such stories should give each of us hope!

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

OUTLINE

1 SAMUEL

I. **Samuel's Ministry** (1:1–12:25)

A. Samuel's birth and call (1:1–3:21)

B. The ark narrative (4:1–7:17)

C. The people ask for a king (8:1–12:25)

II. **Saul's Reign** (13:1–31:13)

A. Saul's battles with the Philistines (13:1–14:52)

B. Saul's failure against the Amalekites (15:1-35)

C. David's selection as Saul's successor (16:1-23)

D. David's victory over Goliath (17:1-58)

E. David's struggles with Saul (18:1–26:25)

F. Saul's reign ends (27:1–31:13)

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources



Prayer

When God answered Hannah's prayer for a son, she dedicated the child to the Lord.

Scripture Passage: 1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28 Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 2:1

In *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin once shared this proverb:

> *For the want of a nail the shoe was lost, for the want of a shoe the horse was lost,*
> *For the want of a horse the rider was lost, for the want of a rider the battle was lost,*
> *For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost, and all for the want of a horseshoe-nail.*[1]

The proverb reminds us of the importance of even the smallest of details. This logic applies especially well to leadership. A company lacking vision can easily go under. A country without wisdom may falter. A family void of compassion and discipline may dissolve into chaos. Leaders and their character are essential.

In ancient Israel, it took the cries of a barren woman to resolve the nation's leadership vacuum. As you prepare to lead this session, think about how the power of prayer has shaped your life. Challenge the adults in your group to focus on prayer as they study today's passages from 1 Samuel 1.

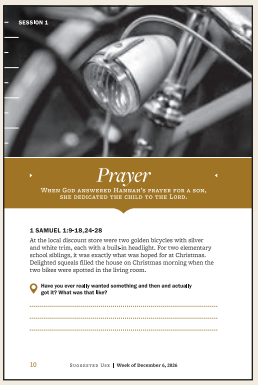
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

At the local discount store were two golden bicycles with silver and white trim, each with a built-in headlight. For two elementary school siblings, it was exactly what was hoped for at Christmas. Delighted squeals filled the house on Christmas morning when the two bikes were spotted in the living room. (PSG, p. 10)

Did you ever have something that you really wanted—and you got it? What was that like?


SESSION 1

Prayer

When God answered Hannah's prayer for a son, she dedicated the child to the Lord.

1 SAMUEL 1:9-18,24-28

At the local discount store were two golden bicycles with silver and white trim, each with a built-in headlight. For two elementary school siblings, it was exactly what was hoped for at Christmas. Delighted squeals filled the house on Christmas morning when the two bikes were spotted in the living room.

Have you ever really wanted something and then and actually got it? What was that like?

10 Student Use | Week of December 6, 2026

Understand the Context (1 Samuel 1:1–2:36)

The nation of Israel was drowning for want of an effective leader. The period of the judges had been turbulent, with various leaders giving some measure of leadership. These judges were not judicial arbitrators of the law, though they may have helped resolve conflicts. Their primary role was delivering the tribes of Israel from military enemies. Some of these judges were wise and strong leaders; others were not.

This period began with the death of Joshua and ended with the selection of Saul as king over Israel. But the leading characteristic of the era was a growing absence of strong leadership. The testimony of Judges 21:25 was the ominous statement that "in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him."

Into this leadership vacuum, God thrust as unlikely a person as one could imagine: a childless woman from a rural community. As a woman, Hannah would experience a diminished status in the culture of Israel. Add to that the social stigma of barrenness, and she would have been the least likely person for God to use in a unique manner. While she herself would not become the leader Israel so desperately needed, she would give birth to that leader.

In an act of selflessness, she would subsequently give that child, named Samuel, to the Lord. He would provide a steady transition from the time of the judges to the anointing of the nation's first king, Saul, son of Kish.

Hannah lived with her husband, Elkanah, in Ramathaim-Zophim. The village was also known as Ramah. Elkanah was a Levite most likely from the family of the Kohathites. Unfortunately for Hannah, Elkanah had another wife, Peninnah, who was able to bear children. While marrying multiple wives was fairly common in Old Testament times, it was not God's original design for the family (Gen. 2:24). Often, polygamy led to intense rivalry and trouble, as it had with Abraham and Jacob. Elkanah's family also struggled, as Peninnah taunted Hannah's barrenness. The insults created a great deal of grief for Hannah.

Under the judges, the tabernacle, which served as the designated worship center for Israel, was in Shiloh, thirty miles north of Jerusalem. According to the Mosaic law, the Jewish people were to make a pilgrimage to the tabernacle three times a year (Ex. 23:14-16). Because many Israelites had fallen into idolatry, it is difficult to say how many of them faithfully made these annual trips. But the writer of 1 Samuel made it clear that Elkanah and his family fulfilled the journeys every year.

As you read 1 Samuel 1:1–2:36 in your Bible, look for evidences of God's sovereignty, of His being in control of people's circumstances. What does this reveal about His character and His being concerned about the lives of His people? (PSG, p. 11)

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Samuel's Life*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*).



ASK: **Did you ever have something that you really wanted—and you got it? What was that like?** (PSG, p. 10)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 10 of the PSG. Encourage adults to share responses. Allow a few individuals to share an opposite experience—when they wanted a specific gift and didn't receive it.



INTRODUCE: Point out **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) and share that the group is starting a study of 1 Samuel. Explain that this first session is focused on a barren woman named Hannah and her prayers to God for a child.

CONTEXT: Use information from Understand the Context (PSG, p. 11) to provide the historical context of 1 Samuel, as well as introduce the primary characters from the first chapter.

> *Elkanah lived in the tribal territory of Benjamin; yet he was from the tribe of Levi (1 Chron. 6:1,27-28). Elkanah had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. . . . Hannah and her story are the focus of 1 Samuel 1—2. In Hebrew, her name means "grace" or "graceful woman." Living up to her name, Hannah was the recipient of God's grace, and she showed great grace despite personal heartache. Eli served as the priest at Shiloh in the opening chapters. He became the custodial guardian of young Samuel.*



TRANSITION: *Hannah was a woman of grace, but her story begins with a difficult challenge. Hannah turned to God for comfort and to seek His blessing on her life.*

Group Activity Option

Music

Provide hymnals and direct adults to "Have Faith in God" (*Baptist Hymnal 2008*, No. 508). Lead adults to sing or read the first two verses aloud together. Encourage volunteers to share situations when they prayed about a matter for a long time before seeing the answer to the prayer. Guide adults to sing the chorus one last time as they prepare to study Hannah and her prayer to God.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

Fervent (1 Sam. 1:9-11)

9 On one occasion, Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. 10 Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. 11 Making a vow, she pleaded, "LORD of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."

(v. 9) The focal passages narrate ***one occasion*** when Elkanah's family worshiped at Shiloh. According to the law, Israelite men were required to appear three times a year before the Lord, but the text does clearly state that this was the purpose of Elkanah's journey here. It's possible that he had a more personal reason for visiting Shiloh. Regardless, this appears to have been a time of joy, feasting, and gratitude for most worshipers.

However, •***Hannah*** experienced no such joy. Her name, which meant "grace" or "a woman of grace," appears twice in the Bible. In addition to this setting, Luke referred to a prophetess named "Anna" (Luke 2:36). Early translations left off the first letter of her name, and that literary tradition was continued by later translations.

Hannah's lack of joy can be traced to two sources. First, she was childless. In that culture, barrenness was a devastating social stigma. Earlier verses imply that God was the One who had engineered her circumstances (1 Sam. 1:5-6). As later verses will reveal, He also had something special in mind to remedy her situation.

Second, Hannah suffered at the hands of her rival, Peninnah. The other wife of Elkanah, Peninnah constantly ridiculed Hannah's condition. Yet, instead of lashing out, Hannah chose to take her grief to God in prayer.

•***Eli*** was the priest and judge serving at Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:18). ***Sitting on a chair*** carried a sense of authority. At this point in his life, Eli's age and physical condition may have left him unable to take the lead in offering sacrifices. Other passages also highlight his lack of fortitude and his leadership gaps (1 Sam. 3:11-14). Thus, God began the process of replacing him.

In the wilderness, Israel had worshiped in a portable tent. The term ***doorpost*** indicates that Shiloh's worship center was a more complex structure than the original tabernacle. Its fixed nature led to it being called ***the LORD's temple***. This complex even had sleeping quarters (3:15).

(v. 10) The description of Hannah as ***deeply hurt*** speaks to the bitterness of her soul. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the term is used of the gnawing sorrow of barrenness (2 Kings 4:27) and of great physical suffering (Job 7:1). Hannah's emotional state is repeated three more times: "affliction" (v. 11), "broken heart" (v. 15), and "anguish and resentment" (v. 16).

Instead of being paralyzed by her grief, Hannah ***prayed to the LORD***. *The LORD* is the personal and covenantal name of God: Yahweh. The use of this name spoke of a deep faith in God's sovereignty in her situation. ***With many tears*** reveals her strong emotions in the moment.

(v. 11) A ***vow*** was a sacred promise made to God following the formula, "I'll do this, God, if you'll do that." Numbers 30 lists strict regulations for women making a *vow*. Hannah's words are the first example in the Old Testament of a vow being made and fulfilled. According to the law, Hannah also would need to inform Elkanah of her vow and secure his approval (Num. 30:10-11).

Hannah addressed God by His sovereign name, ***LORD of Armies***. This title speaks of God's sovereign control over all powers and authorities. *Armies* could refer to physical armies on the earth or to the sun, moon, and stars of the sky. It also could indicate the angels and all the created beings around the throne of God.

Hannah's prayer included a petition for God to ***remember*** her. This involves a cry for God to spring into action on her behalf. Hannah's deepest desire was that God would provide ***a son***. Using the familiar vow formula, Hannah promised that she would give her boy back to God to serve Him ***all the days of his life***. The vow also included a commitment that her son would be a Nazirite: ***his hair will never be cut*** (Num. 6:1-21).

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

APPLICATION POINT: **We can cry out to God with our requests.**

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:9-11** as adults listen for Hannah's requests as she prayed.

RECAP: Summarize 1 Samuel 1:1-8 to provide context for Hannah's prayer. Explain that Hannah had been praying for a child for years, all while dealing with Peninnah's taunts.

IDENTIFY: Ask adults to call out the specific requests Hannah made in her prayer as you jot them on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper. Summarize the following information from page 12 of the PSG to explain Hannah's distress.

> "The cause for Hannah's anguish was her barren condition. Many ancient Hebrews believed barrenness was a curse from God and thus saw it as a disgrace (Luke 1:25). Maintaining the family's flocks and fields required many hands. Children were thus essential for preserving a family's stability and viability. Hannah's barren condition may have motivated Elkanah to take Peninnah as a second wife (1 Sam. 1:2). Peninnah's taunting and provoking her would have added to Hannah's anguish (see v. 6)."

EXPLAIN: Point out that Hannah's prayer included elements of a Nazirite vow as described in Numbers 6. Note that God normally initiated Nazirite vows, but Hannah's actions underscore the serious nature of her prayer.

ASK: **What does Hannah's prayer teach us about the proper way to approach God in prayer?** (PSG p. 13)

SAY: *Fervent prayer was for Hannah, and is for us, an acceptable way to approach God. Some people, however, may not understand the sincerity of such prayers.*

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Read the article "Nazirite" in a Bible dictionary to learn more about a Nazirite vow. Consider the similarity between Samuel and Samson. Read Samson's dedication as a Nazirite in Judges 13. ***How were they alike? How were they different? How does the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1) compare to that of Samson and Samuel?***

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

Persistent (1 Sam. 1:12-18)

12 While she continued praying in the LORD's presence, Eli watched her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, "How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!" 15 "No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven't had any wine or beer; I've been pouring out my heart before the LORD. 16 Don't think of me as a wicked woman; I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment." 17 Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him." 18 "May your servant find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

(v. 12) Hannah's prayer was intense and personal. ***Continued*** suggests it also may have been lengthy. Although her lips were moving, there was no sound. In Hannah's day, prayers were usually audible, but her anguish led her to pour out her concerns silently (v. 15). God hears all the prayers of our hearts, whether silent or audible. Hannah was ***in the LORD's presence,*** which points to a deep, personal relationship with Him.

Meanwhile, Eli was watching over the tabernacle, ensuring that nothing would desecrate the worship center. As Hannah prayed, he ***watched her mouth***. This was no passing glance. He focused on her intently.

(vv. 13-14) Hannah was offering a private prayer meant for God alone. However, Eli stepped in because he ***thought she was drunk***. No doubt he had seen lots of drunkenness during Israel's festivals, so he assumed this was another example.

Following up on his uninformed conclusion, Eli chastised Hannah: ***How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!*** This is the first clue to Eli's shallow spiritual condition. Rather than discerning Hannah's anguish, he assumed the worst. Instead of being an encourager of Hannah in her grief, he became a harsh critic.

(vv. 15-17) Hannah quickly explained that her distress was not from ***wine or beer.*** Instead of being a ***wicked woman,*** she had a ***broken heart***. Here, *wicked* describes one who is worthless and fails to give proper respect to God. Her silent prayer arose from her broken heart to the only One who could ease her pain.

Hannah used the sacred name of God, *Yahweh*, seven times. In contrast, Eli used a more distant title: ***the God of Israel***. The contrast between the two is another hint of Eli's weak faith and his insensitive leadership.

(v. 18) Although he was spiritually shallow, Eli finally acknowledged Hannah's prayer and pronounced a blessing on her. With this affirmation, Hannah's countenance changed. Out of gratitude she thanked Eli, calling herself ***your servant***. This was a statement of respect for Eli.

Hannah had entered the tabernacle in great torment and grief. As she left, her demeanor had changed radically. Her appetite returned and she ***no longer looked despondent***. She was sure that God had heard and would answer her prayer.

Praying Scripture

1 Samuel 1:16-18

Spend time praying Scripture using 1 Samuel 1:16-18. Read the verses, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in these verses?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Share with the Lord any deep and painful issues that are hurting you right now. Pour out your anguish to Him. Thank Him for hearing your prayers and responding to your cries.

During the session, invite adults to pray this Scripture as well. You and the adults in your group can also take advantage of the Explore the Bible Prayer Guide. This QR code also appears on page 18 of the *Personal Study Guide*.

Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

APPLICATION POINT: **We need to be sensitive to those carrying burdens.**

READ: **Read aloud 1 Samuel 1:12-18** while half of the group listens for Eli's initial observation about Hannah's prayers and the others listen for Hannah's response to Eli's accusation.

COMPARE: Call on the first group to characterize Eli's initial observation and impression of Hannah's behavior. Point out that most prayers in Eli's day were audible, which likely caused confusion for him. Note that this also might be an indication that drunkenness had become a common part of Israel's festivals during the period of the judges. Call on the second half of the group to describe how Hannah replied to Eli's accusation. Affirm that we are often guilty of a similar rush to judgment today.

ASK: **Why are some people quick to make assumptions about others' spiritual condition without knowing the facts?**

RECAP: Point out that Eli's attitude shifted and how his words affected Hannah moving forward.

> *Eli's tone dramatically changed after Hannah's explanation. Rather than criticism, Eli showed compassion and spoke words of faith. . . Eli spoke a blessing to Hannah. He wanted God to grant Hannah her request. The Old Testament tells of Hebrew priests offering a blessing to God's people (Lev. 9:22-23; 2 Chron. 30:27). This is the only time recorded in the Old Testament that a priest offered a blessing to an individual. . . . Giving evidence that she had been encouraged by Eli's words, Hannah was finished praying. She was ready to be on her way. Her appetite, which had gone away (1 Sam. 1:7-8), returned; her countenance improved. No doubt, she left Shiloh feeling hopeful rather than hopeless.* (PSG, p. 15)

ASK: **How can we show greater sensitivity to people who are carrying burdens?** (PSG, p. 16)

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*). Encourage adults to spend a few minutes praying 1 Samuel 1:16-18 back to God as noted on page 20 of the Leader Guide.


PRAYING SCRIPTURE IN 1 SAMUEL

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

Fulfilled (1 Sam. 1:24-28)

24 When she had weaned him, she took him with her to Shiloh, as well as a three-year-old bull, half a bushel of flour, and a clay jar of wine. Though the boy was still young, she took him to the LORD's house at Shiloh. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli. 26 "Please, my lord," she said, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. 27 I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for, 28 I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he worshiped the LORD there.

(vv. 24-25) Hannah's prayer was answered in due time. God "remembered" her and acted on her behalf by giving her a son named Samuel. Literally, the name means "name of God" and has been translated as "asked of God" or "heard of God." God was faithful to keep His vow. Now, Hannah moved to fulfill her vow.

Elkanah and his family continued their regular pilgrimages to •***Shiloh***. After Samuel's birth, though, Hannah chose not to go for a season. Her long-range plan was to dedicate Samuel for service in the tabernacle. Until he was old enough, she kept him at home and nurtured him for the crucial role he would play in Israel.

Elkanah agreed, honoring the vow Hannah had made (v. 23). They both made the commitment that the young Samuel would serve the Lord, and they fulfilled that commitment willingly. The text, however, is very specific that Hannah was the one who presented Samuel to ***Eli***.

Normally, Jewish mothers nursed their children until around three years of age. This extended period was partially the result of concern for the child's health because of the lack of a safe water source. Once Samuel had been ***weaned***, Hannah fulfilled her vow by bringing him to ***the LORD's house***. Hannah intended for Samuel to serve the Lord permanently. The law of Moses specified that the first-born male child was to be dedicated to the Lord and then redeemed back (Ex. 13:2,13). Sometimes a child might serve God for a specified time and then be redeemed. Here, though, Samuel was given to God for the remainder of his life.

Elkanah and Hannah brought an elaborate offering to the Lord: a ***bull, half a bushel of flour, and a clay jar of wine***. This was a great celebration for the family, thanking God for the gift of Samuel and for the opportunity to give him back to the Lord for service.

(v. 26) Following the sacrifice, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli. Hannah refreshed Eli's memory by calling attention to the time almost four years earlier when she stood in the tabernacle praying in anguish. In addressing Eli, Hannah used an oath that is common in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, ***as surely as you live***, to attest to the truthfulness of her statement. Whether Eli remembered the incident is not mentioned in the text. Eli, however, is not the central focus of these verses. The focus is on the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of Hannah in keeping her vow to the Lord.

(vv. 27-28) These verses contain a clever word play in the Hebrew language revolving around Samuel's name. As noted earlier, Samuel can mean "asked of God," but it also can be rendered "lend on request" or "give." In Hannah's statement she used four different forms of the name's Hebrew root word. In verse 27, she noted that she had ***prayed for this boy*** and that God had granted ***what I asked him for.*** In verse 28, she affirmed her desire to ***give the boy to the LORD*** and that he was being ***given to the LORD***.

The phrase ***he worshiped the LORD there*** could refer to Samuel, who dutifully learned to worship under Eli's tutelage. One manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls attributes this statement to Hannah, though it is likely a later scribal addition for clarity. If Hannah is the speaker, this would serve as an introduction to her prayer in 1 Samuel 2.

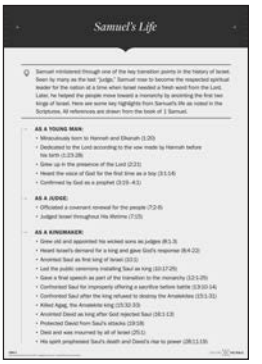
Key Doctrine

Family
Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. (See Psalm 127; Proverbs 17:6.)

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

APPLICATION POINT: Believers should follow through on what they vow to do.

SUMMARIZE: Briefly recount the events of 1 Samuel 1:19-23, emphasizing God's faithfulness in answering Hannah's prayer. Call attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Samuel's Life*) and mention that the birth of Samuel begins his long and significant life.



READ: **Call on a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:24-28** as the group listens for actions Hannah took in fulfilling her vow to God.

ASK: **How did Hannah's acts of worship reflect her attitude as she fulfilled her vow?**

RECAP: Point out the size of Hannah's offerings and how they likely represented her gratitude to the Lord for answered prayers. Highlight the importance of fulfilling vows to God:

> *The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's vow to God completely and promptly (Num. 5:4-5). Hannah was doing that. She knew that God had given this son to her; now, she was giving him back to God. Giving Samuel to the Lord did not mean she was deserting him or shirking her responsibility. She was placing him in the Lord's presence.* (PSG, p. 17)

ASK: **When has prayer strengthened your faith in God? What is the relationship between our prayer life and our walk with the Lord?** (PSG, p. 17).

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Worship Items

Prior to the session, secure a calendar, an offering envelope, a devotional guide, a hymnal, and other objects that might represent personal worship and commitment to the Lord. Display the objects and encourage the group to identify what these items have in common. After a moment, explain that using our time, giving our finances, singing, and spending daily time with God in prayer and in His Word are ways we can worship the Lord. Ask: ***How are these things similar to, or different than, what Hannah did to worship God?***

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from Apply the Text on page 18 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We can cry out to God with our requests.*
- *We need to be sensitive to those carrying burdens.*
- *Believers should follow through on what they vow to do.*

DISCUSS: Direct the group to find and read the first set of questions on page 18 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share a time in life when God has answered their prayers, especially in the small things of life.

REFLECT: Challenge adults to read and reflect on the second set of questions on page 18 of the PSG. Guide them to evaluate the consistency of their prayer lives silently and to begin making a plan to spend quality time in prayer with the Lord. Remind them about the importance of fulfilling promises they've made to God.

PRAY: Lead a time of prayer for those who are carrying heavy burdens. Guide adults to pray for friends and family members they know who are struggling with long-term challenges. Draw attention again to **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*). Encourage the group to continue using the handout to allow Scripture to guide their prayers during the week.

1. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/626466-for-the-want-of-a-nail-the-shoe-was-lost

AFTER THE SESSION

Follow up this session by contacting individuals who expressed concern over specific spiritual burdens they are carrying. Call them and pray with them, or text them and let them know you are praying regularly for their needs. Invite them to share how God is answering their prayers, or how you may continue praying for needs as they develop.

LEADER EXTRAS

For free bonus introduction and application ideas that connect to a current news event, go to **goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras.**

EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

© 2026 Lifeway Christian Resources