

connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

Character and the **CROWN**

A STUDY OF
1 Samuel

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Don Garner • Ronnie & Renate Hood
David Morgan • Rusty Walton • Patrick Wilson



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Character and the Crown (1 Samuel)—Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.

5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class, and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

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FREE! Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at www.baptistwaypress.org. Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to www.baptistwaypress.org and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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Character and the Crown

A Study of 1 Samuel

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lesson 1

A Desperate Plea from a Faithful Follower

MAIN IDEA

Hannah made a desperate plea to God and fulfilled her vow.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What do you desperately need from God?

TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to trust God to meet their desperate needs



Bible Comments

Understanding the Context

The Books of 1 & 2 Samuel narrate a century of dramatic transitions and significant transformations in Israel—socially and politically. The sun was setting over the period of the judges and rising over the time of the Israelite kingdoms. Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David are the primary characters in these books.

As 1 Samuel begins, Israel was in crisis. Since the time of Joshua, the Israelites had lived in Canaan as a loose confederation of tribes. Each tribe was self-governing (Judges 17:6; 21:25), but from time to time the tribes helped defend one another from outside forces and worshiped together at the sanctuary of the Ark of the Covenant, located in Shiloh. Internal pressures related to the failures of the house of Eli as religious leaders and the external stress of Israel's enemies, particularly the Philistines, produced the crisis we see depicted at the beginning of the Book of 1 Samuel. This crisis led the people to demand—and God to grant—a king to rule over Israel (1 Sam. 8).

The Israelites were a people in covenant with God (Exodus 19–24; Deuteronomy); therefore, theological dimensions dictated the transition from a confederation of tribes to a people governed by a king. As you study 1 Samuel, note the emphasis on God's sovereignty (rule) and its relation to the rule of the king of Israel, the significant role of the prophet as one who speaks for God, and the continuing emphasis on Deuteronomistic theology: obedience brings blessing; disobedience brings judgment. (See Deut. 30:11–20.)

Samuel played a significant role in Israel's story. Scripture describes him in various ways: a faithful priest (in contrast to Eli's sons), the last of the judges, among the first of the prophets, a kingmaker (anointed Saul and David), and a king breaker (told Saul God had rejected him as king [1 Sam. 15:23]). But this famous character's story began humbly with the unique circumstances of his birth. As you study the first chapter of the Book of 1 Samuel, consider how Hannah's desperate situation (crisis and uncertain future) mirrors the experience of the Israelites.¹

Interpreting the Scriptures

Elkanah and Hannah: Faithful Followers of God (1:1–3)

1:1. Samuel’s father, Elkanah, was a man of distinguished Levite lineage (1 Chronicles 6:25–28, 33–34). Levite heritage grounded Samuel’s authorization to serve the Lord at the Shiloh sanctuary. Samuel’s family lived in Ramah, a town in the southern region of the tribal territory of Ephraim, bordering on the tribal territory of Benjamin (1 Sam. 2:11).

1:2. Elkanah had two wives: Hannah, whose name means *grace*, and Peninnah, whose name means *pearl*. The Bible later substantiates that one wife is God’s ideal (Matthew 19:4–6). The passage first mentions Hannah, and verse 5 reveals why: “But to Hannah [Elkanah] gave a double portion because he loved her,” which indicates Elkanah preferred Hannah over Peninnah. However, Peninnah, who had children, receives family priority (“all Peninnah’s sons and daughters” as described in 1 Samuel 1:4), because Hannah had no children. This distinction may seem like a simple statement of fact, but the reality deeply distressed Hannah.

1:3. Elkanah and his family were faithful worshippers of the Lord, going up to Shiloh from their hometown every year. “Going up” was a common phrase for designating a pilgrimage—a journey taken for the express purpose of worship (Judges 21:19). In verse 3, Eli, the priest, and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, make their appearances. The “faithless” sons of Eli are contrasted with the “faithful” Samuel as the story unfolds.

Hannah’s Desperate Situation (1:4–8)

1:4–5. Israelite worshippers did not eat any of the meat offered to God as a sin or guilt offering, but they received back a portion of their thanksgiving and peace offerings (Leviticus 7:11–18). Israelites ate this meat in celebration of renewed fellowship with God. Elkanah gave portions to each member of his family. The distinction between Peninnah, with all her sons and daughters, and the barren Hannah was stark. Elkanah treated Hannah kindly, even showing favor toward her.

1:6–7. Verse 6 labels Peninnah as Hannah’s “rival.” The Hebrew word translated *rival wife* or *vexer*, is derived from a verb that means *to show hostility toward*. The nouns “adversary” and “foe” derive from this verb. Hannah’s rival took the opportunity every year to provoke and irritate Hannah because “the LORD had closed her womb.” As a result, Hannah was reduced to tears and could not eat.

The clause, “the LORD had closed her womb” (vv. 5 and 6) indicates the Old Testament understanding that the birth of a child was God’s blessing. Childbirth was not considered a event that naturally occurred as the result of male and female reproduction. Barrenness was a disgrace. Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, the wives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Genesis 16:1–2; 21:6–7; 25:21; 29:31; 30:1–2), as well as the mother of Samson (Judges 13), experienced infertility. Sarah and Rachel also experienced being despised by Hagar and Leah, the wives who had given birth with their husbands, Abram and Jacob (Gen.16:4–6; 30:22).

1:8. Elkanah attempted to console Hannah by assuring her that she meant more to him than ten sons.

Hannah’s Fervent Prayer (1:9–11)

1:9. After the ceremonial meal, Hannah went alone to the sanctuary to pray.

1:10. “Bitter of spirit” and severely distressed, she was praying to the Lord and weeping intensely.

1:11. In the Book of 1 Samuel, Hannah and Samuel are the only individuals described as praying or interceding with God. Hannah prayed and made a vow to “Lord Almighty,” a phrase also translated “the Lord of Hosts.” The title emphasizes God’s power over the heavens and the armies of Israel. Hannah trusted that the God who had this power cared enough about a simple woman to hear and grant her petition. That’s faith.

Hannah prayed humbly; in the Hebrew text of this verse, Hannah calls herself “your maidservant” three times. She was humble before God but courageous enough to ask him to relieve her distress. She made a vow to the Lord that followed the traditional pattern of making vows in the Old Testament: it was voluntary (she was not required to make the vow), it included a

condition (if the Lord gave her a son), and concluded with a commitment if God fulfilled the condition. Hannah vowed to give her son to the Lord all the days of his life and to never cut his hair. This final promise is reminiscent of the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1–8; Judges 13:3–5).

Hannah's Conversation with Eli (1:12–28)

1:12–14. The priest Eli, who sat near the entrance to the sanctuary, observed Hannah's fervent praying. Although Hannah's lips were moving, she was praying silently. During these times, people usually prayed aloud. Since Hannah had been at the celebration meal where the participants ate and drank wine (verse 9), Eli assumed she was drunk.

1:15–16. Notice Hannah's respectful but courageous response to Eli. She explained that her actions were the result of being "deeply troubled," in "anguish" (anxiety) and "grief" (vexation).

1:17. Eli blessed Hannah and sent her out in "peace," the opposite of distress, anxiety, grief, and vexation.

1:18. Note how Hannah's prayer and Eli's blessing brought peace. Hannah ate and was no longer downcast. The change in her demeanor was not the result of answered prayer (that had not yet happened), but her request had been made, and heard by God. Hannah was a woman of faith.

The Birth of Samuel (1:19–20)

The LORD "remembered" Hannah, so she conceived and gave birth to a son. When Jacob's wife Rachel finally conceived after many years and gave birth to Joseph, this same phrase "the Lord remembered" was used (Gen. 30:22). God had not forgotten; instead, he was acting to accomplish his good purposes in his timing (Gen. 8:1 and Exodus 2:24).

What's in a name? In the Old Testament world, names held deep meaning and significance. Hannah named her son "Samuel," which means *heard by God* (signifying an answer to her prayer). As you continue to study 1 Samuel, notice Samuel's characterization as a great man of prayer.

The Dedication of Samuel (1:21–28)

1:21–23. After Samuel’s birth, Hannah did not go to Shiloh to worship with the family until she weaned him. In Old Testament times—before bottles, formula, and processed baby food—children were weaned later, up to three years of age.

1:24–28. Hannah and Elkanah kept the vow and presented Samuel to serve the Lord for his entire life. Samuel was raised by Eli at Shiloh, while his family continued to live at Ramah.

Focusing on the Meaning

The title of this lesson is apt: “A Desperate Plea from a Faithful Follower.” The storyline in 1 Samuel 1 made it abundantly clear that Hannah was in a desperate situation. Although we may never experience the same set of circumstances that afflicted Hannah, all of us at times find ourselves in desperate situations. Coming to a place of desperation did not make Hannah special, nor will it make us unique. The critical question is, what will we do in times like these? Hannah provided a sterling testimony of a faithful follower of God who prayed fervently in her distress. Further, she trusted God to hear and to bless.

The movements of God are made up of his work in and through individuals, and not only those in positions of power. The Book of 1 Samuel is instructive; before there was a king in Israel, there was a prophet named Samuel. And before there was a prophet named Samuel, there was a faithful, praying woman named Hannah.

God answered Hannah’s prayer for a son, a request that seemed to be a small act of blessing a barren woman. However, God did wonderful things through Hannah’s son Samuel.

When we pray to God and trust him to help us during desperate circumstances, he may use that act of faith as a powerful witness and advance his kingdom purposes in ways we cannot imagine.

Teaching Plans

DISCOVERY PLAN

Connect with Life

1. In advance, write the names of various superheroes on index cards. (A set of superhero cards is available in Teaching Resource Items for this study at www.baptistwaypress.org).

At the beginning of class, give each class member a card face down, concealing the identity of the superhero. Instruct everyone to walk around the room with their cards out in front of them so that others see the identity. Explain that the goal is for all class members to correctly guess the identity of the superhero on their cards through the acting of others, without words (as in the game Charades). Allow five minutes for this game. Then, discuss the following:

- How did it feel not knowing your superhero identity?
 - How were you dependent on others to help you understand who you were?
 - How did it feel to guess your secret identity?
 - How did it feel to help others guess their secret identities?
2. Explain that, sometimes, others help us or hurt us in determining our identity. On a markerboard, chalkboard, or poster board, make two columns. Label the left column *Help* and the right column *Hurt*. Ask class members to share ways we help others understand their identity in God. Write these in the left column. Then, ask about what we do that hurts people with understanding their God-given identity. Write the responses in the right column.

Say, *As we begin a study of the Book of 1 Samuel and the importance of character, today's lesson will focus on how to remain faithful amidst the helpful and hurtful responses of others.* Encourage the class to express some of the challenges they are facing and then pray for God's guidance in these challenging situations.

Guide Bible Study

3. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 1:1–8. Using the “Bible Comments” section of the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this Scripture passage. Before class time, familiarize yourself with the barrenness of Sarai (Genesis 11:30), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), and Rachel (Gen. 29:31). Read aloud this statement from the *Study Guide*: “For many women in ancient Israel, being able to bear children was a sign of significance and contribution to her spouse and the family lineage.” Ask the class to consider the following discussion questions:
 - How do you think Hannah (Sarai, Rebekah, and Rachel) felt about her barrenness?
 - Do you think it is easier or harder for women today who want to have a child but cannot? Explain your answer.
 - What might be some other issues that cause misery in people today?
4. Describe how Peninnah taunted Hannah. Ask the class to consider the following discussion question from the *Study Guide*: *Have you ever been provoked by a rival? How did you respond?*
5. Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:9–18 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” in the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Talk about the misery Hannah experienced, refer to some of the prayer requests stated at the beginning of class time, then ask:
 - *When was the last time you desperately pleaded with the Lord? What happened?*
 - *Have you ever made a vow to God? Did you keep it (are you still keeping it)?*
6. Recruit a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 1:19–28. Using the “Bible Comments” in the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Ask the following discussion questions from the *Study Guide*:
 - *How have you found God to be faithful in meeting your most heartfelt needs?*
 - *How can you demonstrate greater faithfulness in your relationships with God and others?*

Encourage Application

7. End the class by discussing the *Study Guide* sidebar “When God Does Not Do What You Ask.” Explain how God does not always answer prayer requests in the way we desire. He did for Hannah in this instance, but sometimes his plans for us are different from what we wish. Talk through the suggestions in the sidebar and ask for input from the class. Challenge class members to continue in their faithfulness to God, regardless of the outcome of their prayer requests, knowing that God is always faithful to do what is best for us as his children.

DISCUSSION PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Ask class members to consider some of the great rivalries in sports. Some examples include Cowboys vs. Redskins, Red Sox vs. Yankees, Auburn vs. Alabama, Longhorns vs. Sooners. Say, *You may even consider the rivalry between your local high school and a neighboring town.* Then discuss the following questions:
 - What makes these teams such rivals?
 - In what ways are winning or losing games against a rival of greater importance? In what ways are they no more important than any other game?
 - What pressure do you think players feel when they play a rival?
 - What is it like to defeat a rival?
 - What is it like to lose to a rival?
 - How can rivalries go too far?
2. Read Judges 21:25 aloud and summarize what the religious and cultural environment was like at the time of Samuel’s birth. Discuss what it means for “everyone to do as he saw fit.” Ask the class to contrast that assessment with the condition of society today.

Guide Bible Study

3. Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:1–8 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” in the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Discuss the characters mentioned in the story and their relationships with each other. Talk about the complexities associated with Elkanah having two wives, especially since Hannah was barren. Explain the emotional and societal implications of barrenness in Israel at that time. Encourage the class to consider Elkanah and his actions as a spouse. On the left side of a markerboard, chalkboard, or poster board, write the responses provided by the class to this question: *How did Hannah and Elkanah demonstrate faithfulness in their marriage?*
4. Recruit a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:9–18 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” in the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Talk through Hannah’s physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual anguish. Discuss what it means to be “bitter” in soul. Evaluate how Hannah turned to God for comfort. Make a second column in the middle of the markerboard. Write class members’ responses to this question: *How did Hannah demonstrate faithfulness in her misery?*
5. Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:19–28 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” in the *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Talk about how God heard Hannah’s cry. Consider the connection of her life experiences with the naming of her son, Samuel. On the right side of the markerboard, write the class responses to this question: *How did Hannah demonstrate faithfulness in motherhood?*
6. Summarize the *Study Guide* sidebar “The Nazarite Vow.” Talk about what this vow meant in ancient Hebrew society. Discuss vows we make today. Encourage class members to evaluate their commitments to God and themselves, as well as their promises to family members, and their church, business, and community. Ask the class to consider this question: *As a society, do we take our vows as seriously as Hannah did? Why or why not?*

Encourage Application

7. Summarize the *Study Guide* sidebar “When God Does Not Do What You Ask.” Explain how God does not always give us the desires of our hearts. Regardless of whether he does what we ask, we can celebrate that he is our God, and his ways are best.
8. Return to the markerboard and ask the class to consider Hannah’s faithfulness in marriage, misery, and motherhood. Encourage each class member to consider an area where he or she needs to demonstrate greater commitment.
9. Close the class with a prayer of dedication, asking God to help each person follow through with commitments and thanking God for the example of faithfulness Hannah provides.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).