

connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

Called to **SERVE**

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Called to Serve—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.

Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online. Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the Premium Commentary. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the Premium Commentary free.

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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.

Writers of This Teaching Guide

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Called to Serve

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lesson 1

Responding to God's Call to Service

MAIN IDEA

Samuel responded to God's call to service with openness and obedience.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How do we respond to God's call to service?

TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to embrace God's call to service with openness and obedience



Bible Comments

Understanding the Context

What constitutes biblical leadership? The Books of Samuel minimize qualities so often associated with leadership today: personal charisma and positional authority. Although these traits distinguish leaders, the biblical mandate of leadership gives prominence to servant qualities that contribute to the building of the kingdom of God through open, humble obedience.

The Book of Deuteronomy paints the first portrait of a servant leader. The Greek word *Deuteronomion* translates as “a second telling of the law.” Moses first used this word in the plains of Moab, located on the outer banks of the Jordan River. A short time before his death, Moses delivered a five-part sermon series, challenging the community of faith to live as the people of God when they entered and took possession of the Promised Land. The Deuteronomy 17:14–20 passage is vital to the seven Old Testament books that follow it. Communicated during a time when tribal division and loyalty outweighed national identity, these seven verses forecasted the emergence of a unifying king and outlined the character and characteristics by which the king should lead.

The Books of Joshua and Judges demonstrate how the Hebrew people entered the land of Canaan and struggled as a divided people. The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel detail the founding and development of a unified monarchy. The Books of 1 and 2 Kings reflect the degree to which each king did or did not embody the charter specifically established in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Consequently, these six books classify as *Deuteronomistic History*. They recount the establishment of the monarchy, not merely regarding political history, but, first and foremost, as an extended theological reflection on leadership and service in light of biblical commandments. As such, recurring themes in the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel include anointed leadership, messianic theology, and the extent to which power can be used in serving others. There is a call to confess and turn from abusive positional leadership that led to the building of personal kingdoms rather than rendering service to the public under God’s direction.¹

Interpreting the Scriptures

Foundations for Service: Honest Prayer and Committed Obedience (1:6–2:11)

1:6–15. The Book of 1 Samuel begins with the anguish of grief-stricken Hannah, who suffered public scorn and religious misunderstanding. Wracked with the deep pain keenly felt in the loss and absence of children, Hannah bravely poured out her soul to the Lord (1:10–12). Honest prayers that touch and reflect on our deepest pain are perhaps the most difficult, most misconstrued, and most often neglected, but they are often foundational in establishing lives of service and impact. Pain is often a door to future blessing.

When Hannah eventually gave birth to a son, she named him Samuel, which sounds like the Hebrew word translated “heard by God.” Hannah remained committed to her pledge and dedicated the young boy to the Lord. Intense emotions, including waves of self-doubt and fear, must have surely swept through Hannah.

2:1–10. While likely gripped by emotional angst, Hannah offered a remarkable prayer that echoes those of Miriam (Exodus 15:1–17) and Deborah (Judges 5) and foreshadows Mary’s (Luke 1:46–55). These four women voiced stunning public prayers that declared the holiness of God, the transformation of the poor and lowly into his servants, and the strength found in God alone.

In 1 Samuel 2:10, Hannah included a prayer for the future king. At that time, there was no Hebrew king, so this verse is something of a prophetic utterance with the remainder of 1 and 2 Samuel attempting to answer that which Hannah first sensed: Who will ultimately become the leader anointed, strengthened, and exalted by the Lord? In many respects, the prayer of Hannah functions as an important literary tool with the ultimate answer found, not in the leadership of Samuel or Saul, but in that of David, a humble shepherd willingly obedient to God, even in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.

Service Extended: Impact Grows Over Time (2:12–36)

2:12–36. The author of 1 Samuel artfully wove together the stories of two families, alternating between the narrative of the household of Hannah and that of Eli. Though the writer initially presented Hannah as a barren woman accused of public intoxication, and Eli as a priest at home in the temple of the Lord, the family of Hannah developed a legacy of faithful service. Positional leadership, familial heritage, and religious familiarity are eschewed in these chapters, while the transforming grace found in faithful and obedient service is honored.

Eli's sons, described as "scoundrels" (2:12), had no regard for the Lord. (Also see Jeremiah 2:8; 9:6). These men were "religious" but had no relationship with God. They led by position without answering the call to know and serve the Lord. Others confronted Hophni and Phinehas, who responded without remorse or change. They abused a remarkable opportunity by first seeking personal gain. They traded the kingdom of God for stolen resources and sexual gratification. As a priest, Eli was acutely aware of the failings of his sons, but he chose family over change, appeasement over faithful service.

Throughout these chapters of 1 Samuel, the Hebrew root word "*g-d-l*" is regularly repeated, both about Samuel, as well as Hophni and Phinehas. This root word means "to grow, mature, to become great." Over time, Samuel grew, matured and became a great servant of the Lord, while Hophni and Phinehas grew, matured, and became men of great sin. Personal choices lead to character formation. Character—positive and negative—develops over time, and it determines a pathway of negative destruction or positive, influential service.

Calls to Service: Often Surprising (3:1–9)

3:1. The writer of 1 Samuel described a spiritual famine where the "word of the Lord was rare" even apparently, for those living in the very shadows of the temple. Samuel was tending to the lamp of the temple (see Exod. 25:31–38; Leviticus 24:1–4) and resting near the ark of God. Samuel was in a place well-positioned to hear a calling from the Lord. Though referencing a physical location, the spiritual implication is clear: receiving direction from the Lord for our lives often involves a combination of situating ourselves within

contexts conducive to listening, as well as an open and willing heart. While the exact timing and nature of the invitation from the Lord came as a surprise, Samuel was prepared to receive it.

3:4–9. Like many, Samuel needed a spiritual mentor to help him understand the new spiritual journey unfolding in his life. Fortunately, the Lord gave Samuel multiple opportunities to recognize his voice and realize that he was about to be given an extraordinary new opportunity. Calls to new and renewed service often arrive in surprising ways and in the midst of everyday living.

Service: Response Required (3:10–21)

3:10. Samuel, though certainly young in his personal journey, offers a robust model of obedience by maintaining a predisposition first to listen.

3:11–21. Having heard a message that ran counter to Samuel's personal relationship with Eli, the temptation for Samuel to remain silent must have been strong, just as it had been for Eli in light of his son's activities. However, faithful service requires full obedience. Though it must have been painful, Samuel repeated to Eli all that the Lord had said regarding the destruction of those who served the Lord in name but not in action.

Furthermore, these verses are a reminder that it is possible to overcome fear and speak God's truth. This unfettered willingness to respond to God in words and actions unlocked tremendous blessing in Samuel's life. Obedience and not proximity, obedience and not positional authority, obedience and not personal charisma and experience, enable the follower of God to actually hear and remain with the Lord. Ultimately, Samuel's life of faithful service created a character and a public reputation that gave evidence that "the Lord was with Samuel," and Samuel was with the Lord (3:19). What started as a simple vision spoken to a young boy in the middle of the night, turned into a mantle of national leadership and guidance for a people in need. Samuel did not know his response of "here I am" (3:4), uttered in the privacy of the middle of the night, would turn into a word for "all Israel" (3:20). Service to the Lord, even when it requires strenuous obedience, always leads to tremendous blessing and new doors of opportunities.

Focusing on the Meaning

In some respects, these chapters of 1 Samuel contrast squandered potential with significant impact. Though Hophni and Phinehas had positional proximity, personal training, and significant investment regarding the things of God, their self-focus prevented them from experiencing the presence of the Lord, gaining directional guidance, and living in the abundance of kingdom assignments. The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel continue this theme in describing Saul and David's son, Absalom.

A softened heart, combined with a listening and willing spirit, is primed for a journey of meaningful impact. When an individual combines the call to serve with consistently obedient choices, the Lord assures his presence and opens unimagined opportunities. Remarkably, this grace is extended to all people regardless of age, background, gender, or public perception. Like Hannah, who was initially falsely accused and dismissed, often those overlooked by the world become the humble custodians of kingdom advancement.

God issues a constant beckoning to each of us. The first step is often the hardest and frequently begins in a quiet moment of reflection before the Lord. Ultimately, while personal calling requires public obedience, the potential of a yielded heart in service to the Lord and others is God-sized. In Samuel's case, it had national implications and set the stage for generations of faithful reflection. The same can be true for each of us.

Teaching Plans

DISCOVERY PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Launch the Bible study with an old-fashioned game of telephone. To start, whisper something in a class member's ear. That person should then whisper in the ear of the individual sitting next to him or her what you communicated. Repeat this until every person in the class has heard the message. The last person should say out loud what he or she heard from the previous individual. Most likely, the final message will be different than the original one.

Say, Miscommunication often takes place between two people. However, in today's lesson, God communicated his message clearly, and the person to whom he spoke responded in faith and obedience.

Guide Bible Study

2. Before class time, recruit someone to explain to class members the background of today's Bible story. Provide the individual with information from the Bible Comments in this *Teaching Guide* and the "Dark Days" section of the *Study Guide*. Instruct the volunteer to highlight the spiritual decline in the nation demonstrated by Eli's failure to respond appropriately to his sons' sins against God.
3. Enlist four people to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 aloud as a drama with four characters: the narrator, God, Eli, and Samuel. (A script for this reading is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.baptistwaypress.org). If possible, provide props, such as mats to lie on and a lamp. Encourage your volunteers to read the passage with feeling. After the reading, review the passage and use information from this *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* to enhance understanding of the verses. Use information from the *Study Guide* sidebar "Ready to Obey" to highlight the use of the phrase "Here I am" in both this passage and Isaiah 6. Then, ask the following questions:

- *How do you think Samuel felt when he first heard God speak?*
 - *How do you think Samuel felt as he continued to hear a voice he didn't understand?*
 - *Have you ever had an experience of wondering whether God was speaking to you? If so, what did you do?*
 - *How do you know when God is speaking to you through his word, Spirit, or other people?*
4. Read aloud 1 Samuel 3:11–14. Say, *This was the first time God had given Samuel a direct message. Ask, How do you think Samuel felt when he heard the word of judgment about his mentor, Eli? Say, This must have been difficult for Samuel to hear about his mentor. No doubt, he wrestled with how he was going to tell Eli about it.*
 5. Ask class members, *Can you name a time when you had to have a difficult conversation with someone else, such as to resolve conflict or reconcile a relationship? Ask, How did you feel leading up to the conversation?* Discuss how these kinds of hard conversations can make us feel uncomfortable, anxious, or even scared. Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 3:15–18 aloud. Refer to verse one and say, *Samuel was not an adult at the time, yet he had to tell Eli, his mentor in the faith, a difficult message from God. Say, Even though Samuel was undoubtedly troubled by the message, he still obeyed God in delivering the word of judgment. Sometimes, God will call believers to do things that are scary or hard. He wants us to follow through with obedience, trusting him to provide the courage and support we need.*
 6. Read 1 Samuel 3:19–21 aloud. Ask, *What do we learn about Samuel from these verses? Do you think Samuel's obedience as a boy had anything to do with his future success as God's prophet? Why or why not?*

Encourage Application

7. Ask the class to break into small groups, read the *Study Guide* section "Implications and Actions," and discuss why it is sometimes difficult to obey God. Also, direct the class to discuss the *Study Guide* questions. If time allows, bring the groups back together and review the questions. Then, close in prayer, asking God to give class members the courage to respond in faith and obedience when he calls them to serve him.

DISCUSSION PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Before class, tape a large sheet of paper to a focal wall. As adults arrive, distribute markers and direct members to list the names of people who have been spiritual mentors to them. Review the names and point out any duplicates or leaders in your church. Then say, *Today's lesson tells the story of a young man who carried on his mentor's prophetic ministry.*

Guide Bible Study

2. Before class time, print the following outline on a large sheet of paper, tape to a focal wall, and refer to it when appropriate:
 - Samuel hears God's call (3:1–10)
 - God pronounces impending judgment (3:11–14)
 - Samuel speaks God's word to Eli (3:15–18)
 - Samuel grows as God's prophet (3:19–21)
3. Before class time, enlist a volunteer to prepare a brief summary of 1 Samuel 1–2, highlighting the spiritual condition of God's people at that point in Israelite history, and the reason why God was not speaking to the people through Eli.
4. Recruit a class member to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 aloud. Use information from the *Study Guide* sidebar "Ready to Obey" to explain the relevance of the phrase "Here I am." Say, *The phrase indicates a willingness to hear God and obey him.*
5. Before class time, invite two members to share a time when they knew God was telling them to do something, such as get involved in a ministry. Make sure the volunteers convey any struggles related to their obedience, as well as blessings experienced because of their obedience.
6. Read 1 Samuel 3:11–14 aloud and refer to the second bullet item on the outline. Provide a mini-lecture that summarizes the verses. Say, *God doesn't take sin lightly, as these verses of judgment illustrate.*

7. Recruit someone to read 1 Samuel 3:15–18 aloud. Ask, *How do you think Samuel felt when Eli asked him what God had said? Are you surprised at Eli's response to God's message of judgment? Why or why not? How do you think Eli's response influenced Samuel's life?*

Encourage Application

8. Read 1 Samuel 3:19–21 aloud and highlight Samuel's continued success as God's prophet. Say, *Samuel's life is an example of one who served God well. He did not shy away from responsibility just because the path was hard. He was trusted by God to anoint the first two kings of Israel. He was a valuable vessel through whom God spoke for a generation of the life of his people.*
9. Point out the *Study Guide* sidebar "Finding Meaning and Purpose." Encourage class members to review it this week and to reflect on today's Bible study.
10. As time allows, discuss the "Questions" section of the *Study Guide*. Use a few moments of silence to allow class members to think of things God may be asking them to do. Then, direct the class to respond to God's calling with faith and obedience and close in prayer.

Notes

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