LESSON 14

God gives Israel a prophet and judge

1 SAMUEL 1:1–7:17

CENTRAL TRUTH

God graciously provides for His people.

KEY VERSE

"And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked for him from the LORD'" **(1 Sam 1:20).**

Supporting Truths

1. God gives grace to His people.
2. God gives grace to the humble.
3. God is opposed to the proud.
4. God gives grace, but He is still holy.
5. To receive God's grace, one must repent.

Objectives

1. Explain how Samuel was a gracious gift to Hannah and to all Israel.
2. Compare Hannah's humble prayer to Israel's humble repentance.
3. Compare God's response to the proud priests to His response to Israel's proud use of the ark.
4. List 3 examples of people failing to treat God as holy.
5. Describe the parts of Israel's repentance.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God gives Israel a prophet and judge • 1 Samuel 1:1–7:17

Lesson Summary

At the end of the period of the judges, a barren woman named Hannah cried out to God for a son. God showed grace to her by giving her a son. But God's grace to Hannah was just the beginning. Through her son, Samuel, God would show His grace to all Israel. Samuel proclaimed God's word to Israel, led Israel in repentance, and prayed so that God defeated Israel's enemy, the Philistines.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The story of Samuel is a story of God's grace, freely providing salvation to those who have not earned it. It is also a story of the Messiah, since through Samuel God would anoint the king whose descendant would be Jesus. Today, God offers grace through Jesus Christ, whose death pays for sin. But to receive this forgiveness in Christ, we must realize God's holiness, repent, and trust Christ alone.

LAST WEEK

God's sovereignty in the book of Ruth
Ruth 1:1-4:22

THIS WEEK

God gives Israel a prophet and judge
1 Samuel 1:1–7:17

NEXT WEEK

Israel rejects God as King
1 Samuel 8:1–12:25

POSSESSION | UNITED KINGDOM

Lesson Commentary

God graciously provides for His people.

First Samuel begins where Judges ends. Israel had forsaken their God. Even the priests were wicked. Israel's only hope was for God's gracious intervention. And God did intervene. First Samuel begins with an unlikely story of God's grace to one woman. Why? Because the same God who graciously provided a son to barren Hannah would also use that son to graciously provide a leader to the needy nation of Israel. Through that son, Samuel, God would reveal His word to Israel, lead Israel to repentance, deliver them from the Philistines, and eventually anoint David as king. Samuel was a gift of God's grace, both to Hannah and to all Israel.

The LORD gave Hannah a son (1 Sam 1:1–2:10)

God's grace to Israel began with His gift to a barren woman. This woman was Hannah, and her name even means "grace." Grace is the blessing, favor, kindness, and pleasure that God shows to those who have not earned it. At first it does not seem like God was showing Hannah grace, because He caused her to be barren, meaning childless (1 Sam 1:6). However, like other barren women in the Bible—Sarah (Gen 11:30), Rebekah (Gen 25:20–26), Rachel (Gen 29:31–30:24), Manoah's wife (Judg 13), and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5)—Hannah would, by God's grace, bear a very important son.

But before blessing Hannah, God used trouble to drive Hannah to Himself. He used Peninnah's cruel mockery to bring Hannah to tears, and in her tears, Hannah cried out to the LORD (1 Sam 1:6–10). God is sovereign, using even sinful actions and sorrow in order to bring about His gracious plan (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28).

In her sorrow, Hannah cried out to God in a beautiful prayer. She poured out her complaint to God (1 Sam 1:16; Ps 142:2), and she prayed to Him in faith, calling Him "The LORD of hosts" (1 Sam 1:11), the sovereign ruler over all. She made her own request known to God (1 Sam 1:11a; Phil 4:6), but she desired that God would be honored through His answer to her prayer (1 Sam 1:11b; Matt 6:9–10). Finally, after praying, she experienced God's peace (1 Sam 1:18; Phil 4:7).

God answered Hannah's prayer, and Hannah named her son Samuel, which means "one requested from God." Hannah knew Samuel was a gift from God, so she sang another beautiful prayer. In this song Hannah praised the LORD for His holiness and grace. He is holy; there is none like Him (1 Sam 2:2). He will not allow those who oppress His people to prosper. He is also gracious; He lifts up the humble (2:7–8). Just as God did for Hannah, so He would do for all Israel, thundering against their enemies and providing a king to rule over Israel (2:10). In the same way, God continues to exalt all who will humble themselves before Him (Jas 4:10).

The LORD gave Israel a prophet (1 Sam 2:18–4:1)

Unfortunately, Israel ignored God's holiness. As priests, Eli's sons were to be holy, dedicated completely to God. But they took advantage of their exalted position and lived only for themselves (1 Sam 2:12–17, 22). They used the sacrifices, which were most holy to God, to satisfy their own desires. They persisted in their sin so long that eventually God hardened them, ensuring God's judgment of their sin (2:25; Rom 1:24).

Eli was also guilty. Although he told his sons to stop (1 Sam 2:23–25), his words were empty, since he did nothing to stop them. He honored his wicked sons more than the holy God (2:29). As a result, God revealed that

THINK ABOUT IT
God opposes those who despise His holiness, whether they actively disobey or just tolerate evil.

He would punish Eli's family—his two sons would die on the same day (2:30–34).

In contrast to Eli's sons, Samuel served the LORD (2:11). As Samuel grew up, he also grew in godliness, maturing both spiritually and socially (2:26; cf. Luke 2:52). The contrast between Eli's family and Hannah's family shows that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Sam 2:21, 34; Jas 4:6). Samuel's growth in godliness also shows that even when evil seems rampant, God is at work quietly accomplishing His gracious plan.

God showed grace to all of Israel by raising Samuel up as their prophet. Samuel was ready to obey as God's faithful servant (1 Sam 3:10), and even though the first prophecy was bad news, Samuel spoke God's word faithfully (3:11–18). God's word had been rare in Israel (3:1), but through Samuel, God's word came again to all Israel, from the northern boundary at Dan to the southern boundary at Beersheba (3:20). God's words through Samuel were a precious gift to His people Israel.

The LORD gave Israel a judge (1 Sam 4–7)

Like their priests, Israel did not treat God as holy. When Israel carried the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines, they were using it like a good-luck charm (1 Sam 4). They thought they could use the symbol of God's presence to get whatever they wanted. However, God punished Israel for failing to treat Him as holy, allowing the Philistines to defeat Israel, kill 30,000 men, and capture the ark. By causing Israel to lose, God showed He could not be used like a charm. He must be treated as holy.

The Philistines believed that Israel's defeat showed that their god, Dagon, was greater than the LORD. They took the ark and put it in the Dagon's temple to show the LORD's weakness (5:2). But God would not allow this Philistine idol to stand next to the ark. He humiliated Dagon and struck the Philistines with a terrible plague (5:3–6). Eventually, the Philistines returned the ark, admitting that they had sinned and that they had no power over the LORD (6:1–12).

THINK ABOUT IT
"Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God?" (1 Sam 6:20).

When the ark came to Beth-shemesh, the Israelites there still failed to treat God as holy (6:19). God's judgment was devastating. While the Philistines killed only 30,000 Israelites, God Himself killed 50,070 Israelites after some of the men did not treat the ark as holy. Because God is holy, He is to be feared above all.

Finally, after 20 years of Samuel faithfully proclaiming God's word to Israel, Israel began to seek the LORD (7:2). Samuel knew that true repentance requires confessing sin, turning away from sin, and turning to God alone. So he called Israel to get rid of their idols and worship God alone, and Israel obeyed (7:3–6).

When the Philistines prepared to attack again, Israel asked Samuel to cry out to God on their behalf, and God heard Samuel's prayer. He confused the Philistines by thundering against them, just as Hannah had predicted in her song of praise (7:10; 2:10). So God's people should not let difficulty turn them away from seeking God. To those who seek God first, God provides everything they need (Matt 6:33).

After their defeat of the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone called "Ebenezer," which means "stone of help" (1 Sam 7:12). He said, "The LORD has helped us up to this point." Everything that had happened—even Israel's defeat, the deaths of the priests, the loss of the ark, and the judgment at Beth-Shemesh—all this was for Israel's good. God was helping them to know their own sinfulness, recognize God's holiness, repent, and trust in His power.

The story of Samuel is a gospel story. It is a story of God's grace, freely providing salvation to those who have not earned it. It is a story of God's holiness, demanding true repentance and worship of God alone. It is also a story of the Messiah, since through Samuel God would anoint the king whose descendant would be Jesus. Today, God offers grace through Jesus Christ, whose death pays for sin. But to receive this forgiveness in Christ, we must realize God's holiness, repent, and trust Christ alone.

Lesson Outline

God graciously provides for His people.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Hannah could not have children (1:1–8).
2. Hannah asked the LORD for a son (1:9–18).
3. The LORD gave Hannah a son (1:19–28).
4. Hannah praised the LORD for her son (2:1–10).
5. Hannah's son served the LORD (2:11, 18–21, 26; 3:1–4:1).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The LORD gave Hannah a son (1 Sam 1:1–2:10)**
   - Problem: God kept Hannah from having children, and Peninnah insulted her (1:1–8).
   - Hannah asked God for a son (1:9–18).
   - Hannah had a son and devoted him to the LORD (1:19–28).
   - Hannah praised the LORD for showing grace to the humble (2:1–10).

2. **The LORD gave Israel a prophet (1 Sam 2:11–4:1)**
   - Problem: Eli's sons despised the LORD, so the LORD would kill them (2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36).
   - Samuel grew and served in the LORD's presence (2:11, 18–21, 26).
   - The LORD called Samuel to be His prophet, and Samuel was ready (3:1–4:1).

3. **The LORD gave Israel a judge (1 Sam 7).**
   - Problem: Israel did not treat God as holy, so many Israelites were killed (4:1–7:1).
   - Israel finally began to seek the LORD (7:2).
   - Samuel led Israel to truly repent (7:3–6).
   - Samuel cried out to God, and God defeated the Philistines (7:7–14).
   - Samuel kept judging Israel (7:15–17).

Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.

Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What was Hannah's problem?**
   She was barren. She could not have children, and Peninnah made fun of her because of this.
2. **What did Hannah do?**
   She prayed to God.
3. **How did God show grace to Hannah?**
   He gave her a son.
4. **How was Samuel a gift to all Israel?**
   God used Samuel to teach Israel God's word.

Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **How did Hannah's prayer show her humility?**
   She trusted that God was in control of all things. She wanted God to be honored through her son.
2. **What did Hannah praise God for when He answered her prayer?**
   She praised God for His holiness, for opposing the proud but giving grace to the humble, and for being faithful to His anointed king.
3. **How did Eli and his sons despise God's holiness?**
   Eli's sons took whatever meat they wanted from God's sacrifices and were immoral. Eli did not honor God by stopping the sins of his sons
4. **What happened to Eli and his sons?**
   Both sons died in battle. Eli died later the same day after hearing of the ark's capture and the death of both his sons.
5. **What happened when Israel tried to use the ark like a good-luck charm?**
   God caused them to be defeated and the ark to be captured. He showed them He couldn't be used like a charm.
6. **What happened when the Philistines brought the ark into Dagon's temple?**
   The LORD knocked Dagon down, cut him in pieces, and struck the Philistines with a plague. He showed them He was the true God.
7. **What happened when the men of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark?**
   God killed 50,070 of them. He showed them that He must be feared because He is holy.
8. **What did Israel's repentance look like?**
   They confessed their sin, destroyed their idols, worshiped God alone, and trusted Him to save them from the Philistines.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5

INTRODUCE

WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

Bring in an audio recording of various sounds. Play the sounds and ask the children to raise their hands when they know what each sound is. Call on children to identify each sound. You could even have the sounds play from different sides of the room. Ask the children what the sound was and where it came from. In today's lesson, the children will hear about a boy who heard something very special coming from an unexpected place.

WHAT IS A PROPHET?

Samuel was a prophet. Ask the children what they think a prophet is. Explain that a prophet was a person who spoke for God. Get a bullhorn, or make one out of paper, and using it, say today's memory verse with the children. Explain that a prophet is a person who acts like a megaphone. God used His prophets as mouth-pieces to speak His words. He used them to catch the people's attention and turn the people back to Him.

ILLUSTRATE

THREE WRAPPED PRESENTS

Bring three large wrapped packages for the children to open during the lesson. The first should contain a baby doll (Samuel). The second should contain a Bible, since prophets brought the word of God. The third may contain a stone to represent the Ebenezer stone of 1 Samuel 7:12. Other possibilities could be a judge's gavel, a military medal, or a captain's hat.

PROPS

As you teach throughout the story, use props to illustrate major aspects or events. For example, a baby bottle can be used to illustrate Hannah raising Samuel until he was weaned. Baby clothing of various sizes could be used to illustrate that Hannah would bring Samuel clothes every year. A pillow could be used to illustrate that God spoke to Samuel as he was lying down. A thin sheet of metal or a cookie sheet could be used to make thunder sound effects by shaking or striking a thin sheet of metal while reading about God's thunder in 1 Samuel 7:10.

APPLY

GOD'S GIFT OF SAMUEL

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, string, hole punch, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-cut pictures from craft sheet and punch two holes in the top of each picture. Have students color the pictures. Help them to put the pictures on the string in the proper order, as shown below. Tie off the ends of the string.

God's Gift of Samuel
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God gives Israel a prophet and judge • 1 Samuel 1:1–7:17

AGES 6–8

INTRODUCE

HANNAH'S HOPE

The events in today's lesson can be acted out to illustrate for the children what it may have been like for Hannah and Samuel. Ask a female volunteer to dress up as Hannah and tell the story as a monologue from Hannah's perspective.

WHAT IS HONOR?

Ask the children who the most important person in the country is. Ask them why they think that person is important. To honor someone is to think of that person as important. God is the most important person in the universe. Ask the children why God is important. Explain that honor also is placing value or worth on someone. Ask the children what kinds of gifts they would give to a very important person. God is infinitely more important than any person on earth. What kinds of gifts would show God that you think He is important? What kinds of attitudes and actions could you give God as gifts to show Him you think He is important?

ILLUSTRATE

GRACE: FREELY GIVEN

Bring in two 1 dollar bills. Give one away freely. For the other, require a child to accomplish an impossible number of demands (all good ones, like memorizing a book of the Bible). Explain the difference between how each child received the dollar bill. So God showed grace to Hannah and to Israel in giving Samuel to them when they didn't deserve it.

LIKE A GREAT FIRE

Explain that God's holiness is like fire. Fire is a good thing—it gives us light, warmth, and energy—but if we treat fire lightly we will get burned.

APPLY

SAMUEL HEARS GOD SPEAK

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, white paper, scissors, tape, and crayons.

Directions: Cut the pieces from the craft sheet. Color the boy Samuel. Make cuts on the picture along the dotted lines. Place the strip with the arrow behind the picture. Tape another piece of paper to the back to form a pocket that is tight enough to hold the strip, but loose enough to allow it to move up and down. Color the back strip accordingly. Move strip up and down to change Samuel from being asleep to being awake.

Samuel Hears God Speak
See Year2 Craft Book, Book 1.

AGES 9–11

INTRODUCE

MATERNAL TESTIMONY

Invite to class a mother who had a difficult time becoming pregnant. She can share her testimony of how God provided a child (or children) for her, answering a prayer similar to Hannah's.

A GREAT GIFT

Ask the children to think about the greatest gift they have ever received. Now tell the children to imagine that they loved the person who gave the gift so much that once they received the gift, they gave it back to him. In today's story, a woman named Hannah received an amazing gift, one that she had wanted for a very long time. She wanted a child, but God had not given one to her. She asked God for a child and promised that she would give the child back to God. God blessed her with a son, and Hannah kept her promise. She raised the child for a few years and then gave him back to God. God would use that child to do amazing things for Him.

ILLUSTRATE

HOLINESS

A hundred dollar bill looks valuable, until it touches the flames. We too, like Eli and his sons, overestimate our importance. But when we come into contact with God's holiness, our true value is revealed. But what happens when a metal coin goes into the flame? When Christ transforms us, we become righteous in God's sight, and God's holiness will not consume us.

PROPHET OR JUDGE

During the lesson, list the things that refer to Samuel as prophet and Samuel as judge on the marker board. After the lesson, play a review game.

Samuel the Prophet

1. Set apart to God (1:21–23)
2. Ministered to the Lord (2:11; 3:1)
3. God had called him (3:8)
4. God was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground (3:19)
5. Established as a prophet of the Lord (3:20)

Samuel the Judge

1. Called Israel to get rid of idols and turn to the Lord with all their hearts (7:3)
2. Confessed Israel's sins to God (7:5–6)
3. Offered a sacrifice to God and prayed for Israel's deliverance (7:8–9)
4. Set up a memorial stone (7:12)
5. Judged Israel throughout his life (7:16–17)

APPLY

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE

Ask the children if they tell their mom and dad what to do. What would happen if they did this? Why? If they need their parents to do something for them, do they tell them or ask them? Because their parents are in charge, they must honor them and act humbly before them. What happens if they are proud towards them? They are disciplined. The same is true (only in a much greater way!) with God. We cannot tell God what to do. We can only ask humbly, and let Him decide what is best.