

1 Samuel - Introduction

I. People love stories

- A. People love stories because they connect us to something beyond the everyday.
- B. Stories aren't just about heroes and struggles; they're mirrors reflecting our own lives.
- C. They teach us without lecturing, getting under our skin, or making us feel the complexities of being human.
- D. They're not just an escape; they're practical teachers, helping us navigate the messy reality of life, and they articulate rich truths that can be difficult to explain
- E. Think about it, which is more powerful: Jesus has the power to heal and is compassionate vs. story of him touching and healing the leper
 1. Although the stories of Scripture are beautiful narrative, we are a movie culture and seeing it come to life moves you differently
- F. Every story has some key elements. Your kid learned this in elementary school, but let me remind you:
 1. **Setting:** The time and place where the story unfolds. A vivid and well-described setting can enhance the reader's understanding and engagement with the narrative.
 2. **Characters:** The individuals who drive the story forward. Characters can be protagonists, antagonists, or supporting characters. Well-developed characters have distinct personalities, motivations, and arcs.
 3. **Plot:** The sequence of events that make up the story. A plot typically consists of an introduction (exposition), rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
 4. **Conflict:** The central struggle or problem that the characters face. Conflict can be internal (within a character's mind) or external (with other characters, society, nature, etc.).
 5. **Theme:** The central idea or message that the story conveys. Themes can be explicit or implicit and often explore universal concepts such as love, loss, power, or morality.
 6. **Point of View (POV):** The perspective from which the story is told. Common points of view include first person (narrator is a character in the story), third person limited (narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of one character), and third person omniscient (narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of multiple characters).

II. Point of View

- A. The story is told from a 3rd person omniscient point of view.
- B. The author knows things like, "God sent an evil spirit to torment King Saul," or even tells us what characters are thinking about as they act
- C. But the author also has a purpose, even an agenda:
 1. Establishing David's line as the rightful monarchy
 2. Underscoring the theological rejection of God by his people

3. He's showing how the Israelites have violated God's law continually, but God keeps responding with patient mercy and grace

III. Setting

- A. 1 Samuel takes place in the nation of Israel, the Promised Land, around 1100 BC to 1000 BC (roughly)
- B. To truly appreciate the story, though, you need to know the background a bit
 1. Genesis (Creation, Fall, Covenant)
 2. Exodus (rescue, kingdom, Law)
 3. Leviticus (ritual purity → unholy people with a holy God)
 4. Numbers (wandering)
 5. Deuteronomy (second law)
 6. Joshua (Conquest)
 7. Judges (Disarray)
 8. Ruth (David's Grandma)
 9. Samuel...

IV. Characters

- A. Samuel: Prophet, priest, judge (leader)
- B. Saul: King Saul
- C. David: King David

V. Plot

- A. Corrupt nation
- B. People reject God as king
- C. Saul becomes king and he seems like he might be decent, but he's a liar and he's arrogant
- D. God rejects Saul and says David will be king, but it's years before David actually becomes king
- E. The book ends with Saul dying and David becoming the king God wanted

VI. Conflict

- A. Tension between God and his people
 1. Which leads to tension between individuals who aren't living out God's created order
- B. Tension between Saul and Samuel, Saul and David, Saul and his family → basically anyone who Saul perceives as being in his way
 1. Really a conflict between Saul and himself & Saul and the LORD
- C. Inner tension within David of feeling like God spoke this promise over him and authenticated it miraculously, but it's yet to come to pass
 1. "Did God really say that?"
 2. "Is he really going to do that?"
 3. It's this tension of faith and how God breaks our faith down and then rebuilds it like a muscle

VII. Theme: Kingship

- A. God's Kingdom Reign
 1. Sovereignty to orchestrate history to his will
 2. Power to redeem situations for his purposes

- a) Romans 8:28, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
- 3. Authority over all living things and the journey of their lives: As one commentary said, “The course of life is different for each individual, but the same God, not “Fate,” consistently and graciously guides one’s life.”
- 4. Complete control over timing, details, and so much more
- 5. God is sovereign despite mankind’s sin and failure → he redeems and restores even wicked things and turns them around for his purposes
- 6. Mankind’s sin cannot undermine God’s plan nor hamstring his power
- 7. Sin, grace, and mercy unfolds continually in this story, which ultimately points back to the character of God and his Messiah King, Jesus
- 8. All of this underscores God’s “Kingdom Sovereignty”
- B. Mankind’s Monarchy Under God
 - 1. Created to reflect God’s rule and relationship
 - 2. When man disconnects relationally from God, then he also misrepresents God
 - 3. Covenant is the biblical language for relationship
 - 4. Kingdom is the language of rule and responsibility under God
 - a) These two are like the DNA of the Bible
 - 5. Mankind’s kingdom success is entirely dependent on covenant (relational) health
 - 6. This is why God wants a king “after his own heart”

VIII. For Us:

- A. 1 & 2 Samuel are about Israel’s first two kings, Saul and David: who they were, how they came to the throne, and how they fared.
- B. But more than that, the books are about the great King, God himself.
- C. In these stories we catch glimpses of who God is, what he does, what life is like with him and without him, and what life can become by his grace and in the power of his Spirit.
- D. These stories are part of our family history as children of Abraham by faith
- E. They are meant to show us how the Bible pointed to Jesus, encourage us to stay the course and to keep the faith, and to look forward to the majestic realities that God will do one day
- F. These stories are honest about sin and society, but also filled with hope; each glimmer of mercy and grace pointing forward to Jesus
- G. All the main characters are sinners, but it’s their response to God that separates them
 - 1. Saul doesn’t seem to care about God until it’s too late (some can relate to that)
 - 2. David’s first heartbeat is for God despite his failures (some can relate to that!)
 - 3. This is why David, and not Saul, is said to have a heart of after God
- H. This is to say that as we read we need to be careful.

1. Not everything David does is good; not everything Saul does is bad
 2. Not everything Samuel does is good either
 3. Life is more complicated than that, and these are people who truly lived
- I. Still, there is much for US to learn from these characters - their successes and their failures
1. There is much to learn about leadership, about being a man of God
 2. And those are themes and questions we will push into every week
 3. We see a stark contrast between living for God and living against him
 4. And our hearts yearn for the only one who ever truly lived 100% for God - Jesus
 5. 1&2 Samuel is simply setting the stage for Christ
- J. So as we learn, as we journey through these books let us keep praying (and all this year):
1. ***Lord, build your kingdom, by your power, for your glory in us and through us - from here to the ends of the earth***