

Creative Living Bible Study



Choices *that Matter*

Studies from the Life of David

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Choices *that Matter*
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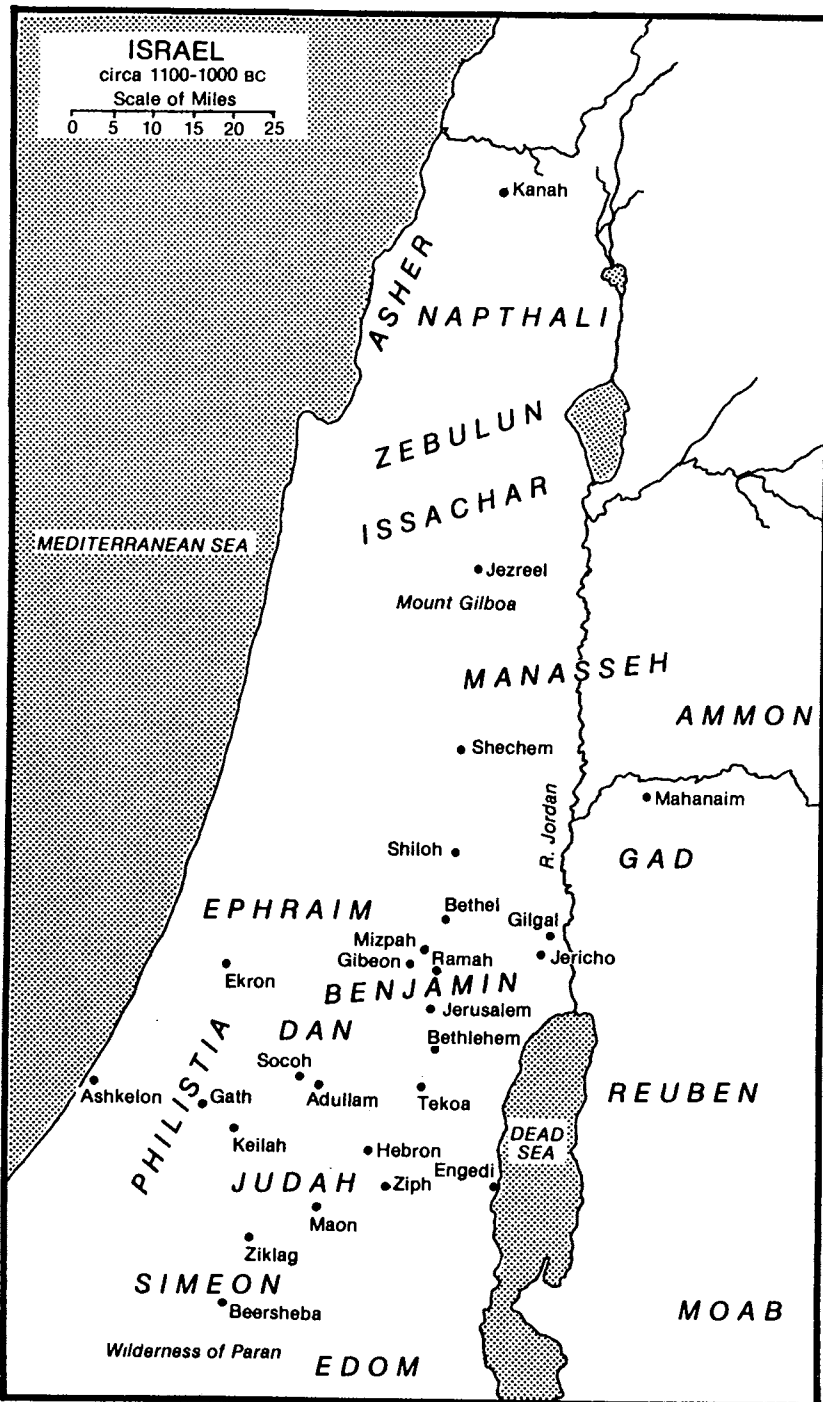
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Before you begin . . .

David is among the Bible's most loved characters, ranking with Abraham, Moses, and Paul as a champion of faith in the living God.

David's experiences were varied. He was a shepherd on the hills of Judah, a servant in King Saul's palace, a very successful warrior and finally a king. He experienced poverty and wealth, hatred and love, persecution and honor, obscurity and prominence, the depths of sin and the heights of worship. But in every position and condition of life, David knew what it was to trust in the Lord. He poured out his heart to God in praises, thanksgiving, confessions and requests, and many of his prayers were preserved in the Psalms.

As we follow the life of David, we will see his great faith, victories and successes as well as his unfaithfulness, defeats and failures. As we are inspired by his writings, cautioned by his mistakes and instructed by his leadership and service, we will learn how to make the choices that matter as we face issues of life today.

Most importantly, our study will build our knowledge of God, who bids us to trust Him to lead our lives in the best possible way. May the pages of this study encourage you as you discover or rediscover that a loving and faithful heavenly Father does not abandon us when we fail, but rather stands by to use even our failures to bring about our blessing.

Diana Schick
Author
Creative Living Bible Studies

Choices That Matter

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PART I

SAMUEL, SAUL AND DAVID

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

The main text for our study of David's life will be the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. David comes on the scene in 1 Samuel 16, but in order to put his life in perspective, we need to start at the beginning of 1 Samuel.

Joshua had led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, a land which God had promised them through their forefather Abraham hundreds of years earlier (Genesis 12:6-7; 17:8). After Israel's conquest of Canaan, God appointed judges¹ to rule over the nation for the next 300 years. These were years of spiritual decline as the Israelites increasingly rejected God and His leadership. They quickly forgot God's miracles that had brought them into the land of Canaan, and they began to view the enemies around their nation as threats too great for God's providence and protection to handle. In spite of God's warning that a monarchy would bring calamity, they demanded to be governed by a king as were the neighboring nations. Their request was both a disregard of God's counsel and a clear rejection of His rule over them (1 Samuel 8:7).

1 Samuel records how God raised up Samuel to be the last judge in Israel. Samuel was also a priest² and prophet³ who warned the people of the consequences of rejecting God's leadership and choosing to have a potentially selfish human to rule over them. The people of Israel

insisted, however, and the disastrous 500 years of monarchy that followed finally resulted in 160 years of captivity in Babylon and Assyria.

The book of 1 Samuel, written by an anonymous author, is the fourth historical volume of the Old Testament. It serves as a transition book, narrating the biographies of the last judge, Samuel, and the first king, Saul. It also relates the early years of David, who is the main character of 2 Samuel. Beginning with Samuel's birth and ending with the death of Saul and establishment of David's reign, 1 Samuel covers about 95 years (approximately 1105-1010 B.C.).

Although the setting is in a barbaric land three thousand years ago, we will see that the people and problems were very similar to those of today.

HANNAH'S STORY

1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

The book of 1 Samuel begins with the story of Hannah, an Israelite woman who was barren. She pleaded with God for a son, promising to give him back to God for the Nazirite priesthood.⁴ God answered her prayer in the birth of Samuel. As she had vowed, Hannah took Samuel at age three to live at the sanctuary of the Lord at Shiloh. She visited her son regularly, but Eli, the priest at Shiloh, raised Samuel.

Unselfishly, Hannah rejoiced to see her son serve the Lord and Israel, and God rewarded her with three other sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:20-21). Through her experience, Hannah had grown to know and love the Lord more deeply, as evidenced by her prayer of praise (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20.

1. What irritation made it especially difficult for Hannah to accept her childlessness (1:2, 6-7)?

2. a. What words described Hannah's emotional state (1:8-11)?

b. How did she deal with her frustration (1:10-11)?

c. What resulted (1:19-20)?

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28.

3. a. What amazing decisions did Hannah make after Samuel's birth?

b. What did Hannah's choices show about her character and relationship with the Lord?

4. What effect did her decisions have on Samuel (1:28b; also 2:11, 18)?

5. What contact did Hannah have with Samuel as he grew (2:19)?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

6. Samuel would become the greatest priest, judge and prophet in Israel since Moses. What does Hannah's song suggest that she taught Samuel about God that prepared him to be the man of the hour for God's people?

Reference: Note 5, *God's chosen people*, p. 11.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Turning Sorrow to Joy

Behind almost every outstanding person is an outstanding parent. Hannah made some wise choices before and after becoming a parent that allowed her son to become a godly leader in Israel. Her choices not only turned her own sorrow into joy, but bridged the gap of need for her entire nation.

Sorrow is a part of life, but often presents the possibility for the greatest joys of life if handled wisely. Let's make some observations about how we can turn our sorrow into joy for ourselves and others.

1. What did Hannah believe about God in spite of her barren condition (1:10-11, 15-18)?

2. J. Oswald Sanders tells the story of the Boston preacher, Phillip Brooks, who was found by a friend pacing up and down the room in great agitation. "What's the matter, Phillips?" the friend asked. "Matter enough," was the reply. "I am in a hurry and God is not."

When our timing and way is not God's, what does Hannah's story encourage us to believe?

Reference: Note, p. 49, question 7.

3. What choices can we make in the face of delay that allows God to turn sorrow into joy?

Philippians 4:6-7

Psalm 37:4-6

Psalm 27:14

4. Hannah also made an unusual decision in what she did with what God gave her in answer to her prayers. What choice in giving did Hannah make that eventually brought her joy and blessed all of Israel (1:11, 22, 24-28, 2:20-21)?

5. What does God promise when we dedicate or give to Him what He has given us?

Luke 6:38

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Malachi 3:10

Note: This verse specifically refers to the *tithe* or *tenth* that the Israelites were instructed to give to the Levites, the tribe of Israel who owned no land, but were in charge of worship and sacrifices throughout the land (Leviticus 27:30). However, the broader principle of God's abundant blessing when we give toward His purposes--whether in time, talent or treasure--is clearly stated in this verse.

6. a. What attitudes and actions commend Hannah as a parent and as a person?

b. What ultimate joy came from the difficult parental choices she made with Samuel?

S U M M A R Y

7. Is there an area of your life that is not fulfilled at this time?

What does Hannah's story encourage you to do regardless of how hopeless the situation may seem?

8. When God answers prayer, what handling of the blessing can bring the most joy?

9. Whether in parenting, marriage or friendship, what attitudes toward those you love can bring the most satisfaction?

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *Judges*. Israel had conquered the land of Canaan in a patchwork manner, and God graciously raised up leaders, called *judges*, to govern the people and bring deliverance from their foes in the land. These leaders led Israel for about 300 years, from the time of the elders who outlived Joshua until the time of the monarchy (about 1350-1050 B.C.). The book of Judges describes the deliverance God brought about for Israel through these leaders and Israel's response (summarized in Judges 2:16-19). The six major judges were Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. Six minor judges were Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon. Samuel was the judge, prophet and priest who guided Israel through the transition from theocracy (God's rule) to

the establishment of a monarchy, the rule of a human king which the people preferred and demanded.

2 Priest. A priest is one who presents the needs of the people to God. In the Old Testament, the sons of Aaron were set apart as priests to offer sacrifices for sins. Christ fulfills the Old Testament priesthood as He offered Himself as the holy lamb of sacrifice for the sins of all people for all time. Through faith in Him, we no longer require a priest, but can go directly to God with our needs. (See Leviticus 17:11, 14; John 1:29, Hebrews 9:22. Also Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16.)

3 Prophet. Prophets were called directly by God and brought God's messages to the people. They always prefaced their words with "This is what the Lord says." They pronounced God's judgment on sin and, as *seers*, predicted the near or distant future. The tests for the authenticity of a prophet were (1) his prophecy always came true (2) his teaching corresponded with God's revelation, and (3) he lived a godly life. Jesus Christ became the final and perfect Prophet, the actual "*Word of God made flesh*" (John 1:1, 14).

4 Nazirite priesthood. This was a special vow of separation and consecration to the Lord that was marked by disciplines in diet, appearance and associations (Numbers 6:1-21). The long hair of the Nazirite was a physical mark of their vow of devotion to God.

The Nazirite vow usually lasted for a set period of time. Samuel's Nazirite priesthood would last a lifetime.

5 God's chosen people also referred to as *Jews, Hebrews, Israel*. These titles all refer to descendants of Abraham. He was a man of faith whom God set apart to become the father of a nation, Israel, whose God-given charge was to make the one true God known to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). From this nation would come the Savior-Messiah who would redeem the world from sin (Isaiah 53, Romans 6:23).