

FALL 2019

The Living Word

SERIES

Godly Leadership



LESSON
MANUAL

Lesson Manual

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LESSON MANUAL

This Lesson Manual has been developed with the goal of providing teachers numerous options to assist in preparation and delivery of each lesson.

In each lesson you will find a Focus Thought, Focus Verse, and Lesson Text that lay a foundation and give direction for the material that is to be presented. Questions are dispersed throughout the body of each lesson to provoke thought and spark discussion. We urge teachers to use these questions as a means of helping students apply each portion of the lesson.

» *How does God being “all knowing” bring you comfort?*

STUDENT WORKBOOK

The Student Workbook has been organized in such a way so that students are given the tools to not only follow the major points of each lesson but will also have a tool to further their personal discipleship and devotion throughout the week.

1. The Focus Thought, Focus Verse, and Culture Connection have been included in the Student Workbook.
2. The Lesson Outline has also been included to give the student a template to follow as the lesson is being taught. In addition, certain parts of the outline correspond with the daily discipleship prompts in the Approach section. This is designed to show what part of the lesson corresponds to the particular day’s lesson text and application questions.
3. The Approach section is designed to give the student daily discipleship prompts by including portions of the lesson and application questions. The flexibility of this section allows for the student to follow along and interact during class, to become familiar with the lesson content before class, or to spend time in review during the week following class.
4. The Ask and Apply questions are presented for the purpose of helping the student contemplate the truths of Scripture and the content of the lesson. The first of the questions in each set is taken directly from the Lesson Manual, while the second question in each set is an additional prompt designed to help the student apply what is being taught.

POWERPOINTS

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God Places Leaders in Our Lives

FOCUS THOUGHT

Because we often need someone to show us the way, God places leaders in our lives.

»» FOCUS VERSE

I Samuel 3:19

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

»» LESSON TEXT

I Samuel 3:19–21

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

I Samuel 7:3–6

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

»» CULTURE CONNECTION

LEADING THE BLIND

Michael Hingson was rescued during the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. His hero was not who you would expect. In fact, she was not even human. The story of a faithful dog named Roselle, leading her blind master and others down nearly eighty flights of stairs in Twin Tower 1, is an amazing story of courage and dedication. The beautiful cream-colored Labrador was the hero, guiding them through fire and thick smoke and finally safely outside the building seconds before it collapsed.

This story is amazing and reminds us of God's care in providing a faithful dog to lead so many people to safety. Most of those people would have died were it not for Roselle, the Labrador hero. God has strategically placed people in our lives to lead us when we are wandering helplessly through life. He handpicks people who will encourage us when we are discouraged, give us sound advice when we are about to make an important decision, or cry with us when we are hurting. When God places a leader in our lives, we can rest assured, that person will help us arrive at the right place. God positions leaders in our lives at just the right time and place.

»» OUTLINE

I. GOD SPOKE TO SAMUEL

- A. God's Voice Sounded Like Eli's Voice
- B. Speak Lord, Your Servant Is Listening

II. SAMUEL OBEYED GOD'S CALL

- A. Godly Leaders Obey God's Call
- B. Godly Leaders Lead People According to God's Word

III. AS THEIR LEADER, SAMUEL INTERCEDED FOR ISRAEL

- A. Samuel Called the People to Repentance
- B. Samuel Called Upon the Lord
- C. God Heard and Answered

IV. GODLY LEADERS ARE GOD'S GIFT TO HIS PEOPLE

»» CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The story is told of a group of weary soldiers during the Revolutionary War who were using their last measure of strength to dig a trench in which to shelter themselves. Instead of offering to help, the leader of this ragged group of soldiers barked orders from the sidelines, threatening punishment if the work was not completed within an hour.

The soldiers and their leader barely noticed the stranger who rode past on horseback. Pausing to observe the scene, the stranger asked the leader, "Why aren't you helping these men dig the trench?" Offended, the leader responded, "Because I am in charge here. If you don't like it, get down in the trench and dig with them." Much to the surprise of all, the stranger grabbed a shovel and began digging; he stayed until the job was completed.

After taking a few moments to congratulate the men on a job well done, the stranger approached the leader and said, "If in the future you find that your exalted rank prevents you from supporting your men, notify your superiors and I will find a more permanent solution." Immediately the arrogant leader realized with whom he was speaking: General George Washington.

I. GOD SPOKE TO SAMUEL

The opening verse of I Samuel 3 reveals, “The word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” The implication is that a direct word from God was rare, so one would likely be surprised and maybe even a little skeptical as to whether or not it was God who was actually speaking. Some Old Testament scholars believe Eli, Samuel’s mentor, had never had a direct encounter with God in his lifetime. Given Samuel’s young age, and the fact that the older, wiser, and well-seasoned high priest Eli had never received direct communication from God, one can understand the confusion Samuel must have felt at the repeated calls for his attention.

This original encounter with God would set the stage for the rest of Samuel’s life. Time and time again, the voice of the Lord would come to Samuel while he served as the prophet to God’s people. I Samuel 3:19 indicates Samuel’s influence was great, and that the Lord “did let none of his words fall to the ground.” None of Samuel’s words were wasted or empty. His influence stretched across the nation of Israel, “from Dan even to Beer-sheba” (I Samuel 3:20), an area covering the far north of the nation, all the way to the southern border, near the Negev Desert.

A. God’s Voice Sounded Like Eli’s Voice

The Temple in Shiloh, where Samuel was apprenticed under the leadership of Eli, was likely a small structure and could have been no more than a well-constructed tent. Since it was not replenished throughout the night, the oil-filled lamp near the Ark of God where Samuel lay sleeping began to flicker and would soon go out.

Samuel was a young boy, and Scripture indicates in I Samuel 3:7 that Samuel “did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.” Given his youth and inexperience, it is not surprising that when called by God, Samuel mistook the voice for that of Eli. He immediately ran to his mentor out of obedience and duty, assuming the aged man needed assistance. Samuel’s trademark obedience demonstrated here would come into play many times in his future as God’s prophet to Israel.

B. Speak Lord, Your Servant Is Listening

Samuel’s obedience at this point in his young life is remarkable. Not only did he faithfully serve his mentor, the high priest Eli, but he willingly answered the voice of God from whom he had never heard before. As was noted in I Samuel 3:1, for many years there had rarely been a word from God, and visions had been infrequent, if at all. But Samuel had been faithfully and carefully taught about Jehovah, the God of his people. Samuel knew the history of their deliverance from Egypt and of Jehovah’s powerful hand of provision in the lives of his ancestral people. Though innocent and young, Samuel chose to be obedient and to trust this great God he had yet to know for himself.

While Samuel's obedience is extraordinary, the patience and persistence of God toward Samuel demonstrated his promise to be "slow to anger" (Exodus 34:6, NIV), one of five key characteristics by which God described Himself to Abraham. God, who knows all hearts, knew Samuel was young and inexperienced and would not likely recognize His voice.

- » *Think about a time in your life when you sensed God's calling or direction. Did you, like Samuel, feel incapable, too young, or too old to believe God could be calling you to a specific work for Him? Explain.*
-

II. SAMUEL OBEYED GOD'S CALL

After three attempts to speak to Samuel, the Lord called a fourth time. Although Eli had instructed Samuel to respond to the call with, "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth," Eli did not reveal to Samuel the identity of the one who called (I Samuel 3:9). Samuel's obedience was, again, remarkable as he followed the instruction of Eli. The unknown voice did not introduce Himself to Samuel, nor did He commission Samuel into the service of God as His prophet. Instead, what followed was like unto a nightmare, as God detailed the bone-chilling judgment He was about to pour out upon the house of Eli because of the blasphemy committed by his sons against God (I Samuel 2:12–17). Jehovah announced, in no uncertain terms, that this judgment upon Eli's house would be forever, and the sins committed would not be forgiven.

- » *How can Samuel serve as an example to believers when it comes to obediently carrying out God's commands even when the way forward is unclear?*
-

A. Godly Leaders Obey God's Call

One can hardly fathom what must have been going through the heart and mind of young Samuel. Scripture states in I Samuel 3:7, "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him." Samuel did not know the Lord, nor had he ever heard His voice. Yet despite his lack of knowledge and understanding, Samuel obeyed Eli and answered as instructed. Sharing such a grim pronouncement of judgment with Eli must have been unnerving for Samuel, for Scripture states that instead of going to straight to Eli in the middle of the night, he waited until the following morning (I Samuel 3:15). Although the news was devastating, Eli knew the word was from the Lord and concluded, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (I Samuel 3:18).

Samuel demonstrated obedience on many levels following his initial encounter with the Lord. Although the voice of the Lord must have been unsettling given the grim pronouncement, Samuel faithfully listened with an obedient heart, ready to carry out the Lord's commands. The morning after hearing God's voice, Samuel arose and faithfully carried out his duties in the Temple, being obedient to Eli's instruction. Then when Eli inquired as to the message from the Lord, Samuel obediently shared all God had said. I Samuel 3:18 reveals, "Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him."

B. Godly Leaders Lead People According to God’s Word

Samuel’s obedience was key to his effectiveness as a leader and prophet in Israel. His responses to God and Eli were filled with humility and respect, even though he knew God was going to pour out judgment for the sins committed by Eli’s sons. Because of his obedience, Samuel came to be trustworthy, a key character trait for effective leaders. Following this initial encounter, Samuel heard God’s voice and faithfully passed his words on to the people of Israel. I Samuel 3:19 speaks to the prolific nature of Samuel’s prophetic work, noting that not only was God with him, but He “did let none of his words fall to the ground.” None of Samuel’s words were wasted, but all carried significant weight, because they were the words of God to His people.

Samuel’s words were truthful and effective, and because of this, his reputation spread throughout all Israel. I Samuel 3:20 states, “All Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.” The people who lived in this large geographic area came to trust Samuel as their leader and prophet because of his obedience and determination to share the true words of Jehovah with the people. Samuel did not use his position to avoid difficult or messy situations; instead he responded with the same willing heart that heard God’s voice as a youth. Because the people knew Samuel had proven himself to be a trustworthy leader, he went on to play key roles in delivering God’s promises and judgments to the people for the rest of his life.

» *Think about some leaders in your life who have followed God in obedience. How has their humility and servant leadership helped to shape your life?*

III. AS THEIR LEADER, SAMUEL INTERCEDED FOR ISRAEL

The opening verses of I Samuel 7 find the people of Israel lamenting. Twenty years earlier, the Ark of the Lord had been returned to the house of Abinidab after being stolen by the Philistines. The people mourned and repented over their sinful worship of the gods of the Philistines, Baal and Astaroth. Baal, the pagan god of fertility, was believed to be the son of Dagon, the false god that repeatedly fell face first before the Ark of the Lord after it had been captured by the Philistines (I Samuel 5:3). Astaroth, the goddess of love and fertility, was worshiped during many rituals throughout the land. These practices were so depraved that worship of these gods was especially abominable in the sight of the Lord. That Israel had sunken so low as to worship in such a hideous manner deeply grieved the Lord.

A. Samuel Called the People to Repentance

Samuel’s plea to the people to gather in repentance was likely filled with urgency due to the grievous nature of their sins. In contrast to demands of false gods that enslaved the people, Samuel’s call to repentance was filled with grace and compassion that could only come from Israel’s true God. The instructions given by Samuel in I Samuel 7:3 stipulated that the people return to God “with all your

hearts.” This was not an outward show of repentance, but one generated from the heart. Samuel knew that unless the hearts of the people were changed, they would never turn to the Lord.

But what if the people refused to experience the “heart surgery” necessary to truly turn them away from false gods? What if they had only paid lip service to Samuel and had walked away with sinful hearts still bound to the false gods? Samuel once again demonstrated effective and godly leadership by getting to the heart of the matter with the people, both literally and figuratively. Samuel led the people in straightforward, honest confession. Together they prayed, “We have sinned against the LORD” (1 Samuel 7:6). Samuel knew that unless the people were direct and wholeheartedly honest about their sin, they would quickly backslide into the same depraved practices.

» *What specifically about Samuel's process in leading the people to repentance can be applied in our own time given the depraved nature of our world?*

B. Samuel Called Upon the Lord

In 1 Samuel 7:5–6, Samuel prayed for the people, essentially standing between them and the God they had so grievously disappointed and sinned against. Samuel knew from the experience of Eli's sons that God did not tolerate willful sin or any flagrant violation of His covenant with the people. Perhaps Samuel wondered if God's wrath would burn against the people, causing him to be caught in the middle. Samuel knew God's grace, faithfulness, mercy, compassion, and slowness to anger, so in humility he led the people in a prayer of repentance. As he prayed, Samuel called upon the name of the Lord, the one true God of Israel.

» *Samuel demonstrated God's compassion and mercy in his prayer for the people. How can Samuel's prayer serve as an example for our own prayers for ourselves and others?*

C. God Heard and Answered

As the people of Israel repented for their sins against Jehovah, they poured out water before the Lord and fasted together for the entire day (1 Samuel 7:6). Both of these acts were symbolic of the people's sincerity and true repentance, and God responded by showing Israel favor when the Philistines attacked. 1 Samuel 7:8 finds the people crying out to Samuel, “Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.” Here the people claimed Jehovah as “our God,” another symbol of their turn from abominable sin to the one true God. They did not turn to one another; instead they looked to Samuel as the one who had been established by God to lead them.

As the Philistine army bore down upon the people of Israel, Samuel once again stood between them and the eminent danger approaching. Taking a young lamb, Samuel offered it as a burnt offering to God, and “cried unto the LORD for Israel; and

the LORD heard him” (1 Samuel 7:9). Samuel modeled obedience to God’s commands, placing himself in harm’s way instead of running away from the approaching army in order to save himself. God’s response to Samuel’s obedience and godly sacrificial leadership of the people was remarkable and overwhelming: “The LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel” (1 Samuel 7:10). Without Samuel’s courageous and obedient leadership, the people would likely have been defeated that day.

IV. GODLY LEADERS ARE GOD’S GIFT TO HIS PEOPLE

Faithful men and women have sacrificially served and led God’s people throughout history. Serving with obedience even when it could have cost their lives, these men and women became God’s hands, feet, and voice to call His people to repentance and consecration. That God would partner with humans who themselves are prone to sin is remarkable, yet time and again Scripture records God doing just that. These godly leaders do not see themselves as above the people, but they come alongside the people, partnering with them as they pursue a life of holiness and separation unto God. These key characteristics of godly leadership were demonstrated throughout Samuel’s life as he continued to be the prophet and judge to whom Israel looked in time of need.

»» INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Sometimes godly leaders must get their hands dirty, both literally and figuratively, as did George Washington in the opening story of this lesson. When God’s people are weary from battles of everyday life, godly leaders come alongside and demonstrate God’s compassion, mercy, faithfulness, and goodness. They also remind us how easily our hearts can stray from the cause to which we are called. Those Revolutionary War soldiers had all but lost hope until their great leader came along and offered a helping hand. Seeing General Washington get down in the ditch and dig alongside them helped them to find renewed strength and courage for the coming battle.

And so it goes with the leaders God places in our lives. These men and women know the weariness of battle; they know how it feels to have all but lost hope. In their faithfulness to God, they intercede, gently but firmly leading those God has placed in their care. Godly leaders “dig with the soldiers,” working to advance God’s kingdom while caring for His people. While it is tempting to complain when we do not understand the decisions or directions taken by leadership, we can know that those who consistently seek God’s face and order their lives by God’s Word will ultimately be led by His hand.