1 Samuel
Wednesday in the Word

by Krisan Marotta
# 1 Samuel

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How to Study a Narrative

Setting
Read the text to get a feeling for the setting of the action. Where or under what circumstances is the action taking place? Describe this setting based upon the events of the preceding passage and/or upon the opening few verses of this passage.

Outline
Read the entire passage carefully noting the shifts in focus on persons and events or the shifts of scene from one place to another. Separate the passage into major scenes and write a one sentence summary of each scene, putting the story into your own words.

Observations
For each of the scenes in your outline answer the following questions:
• What words are repeated in the text?
• List common themes in each scene. Note key words that help lead to your conclusions.
• List the similarities and contrasts between the scenes.

Characters:
• Who are the main characters?
• How does the passage give insight into the characters and what motivates them?
• Describe the relationships between the characters in each scene, noting any changes from preceding passages and chapters.
• Do you see God at work either explicitly or implicitly?
• If God's prophet (Samuel) appears in the scene, what is his function?
• If God's King (David or Saul) is in the scene, what is he suppose to learn?

Themes & Spiritual Principles
• Consider the descriptions, actions of and reactions to the people of God in this scene. Does any of it remind you of passages in the gospels concerning Jesus? Or other New Testament characters?
• Look for and state any spiritual principles from this passage. (A spiritual principle is a universal, timeless truth.) For example, does this passage teach something about the nature of mankind that is always true of one who has the Spirit and/or one who does not? Does something in the text reveal God's character, or how He works or acts?
• Do you see themes in this passage that go beyond this text and are repeated in other passages of Scripture?

Application:
• Look for patterns or examples of success or failures and what we learn from them that we could apply to our lives today.
• Look for lessons about God that are applicable to our lives today.
Suggested Reading

How to Study the Bible

- Basics of Bible Interpretation, by Bob Smith — a classic! great for the beginner. Now available FREE online, though I believe you can still buy a paper copy.  
  http://www.raystedman.org/leadership/smith/

- Adventuring Through the Bible: A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible, by Ray C Stedman — this is my favorite one-volume commentary; It is often my starting point when beginning a new study. You can buy a paper copy or access it FREE online.  
  http://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring

- Precepts Austin – How to do an Inductive Study — Complete at least the first 3 lessons in how to do an inductive bible study. Then explore the rest of the resources on this helpful site.  
  http://www.preceptaustin.org/inductive_bible_study.htm

- Living by the Book, (Book and Workbook) by Howard G Hendricks & William Hendricks – also available as an ebook and a video series. Don’t be intimidated by the size of the book. The writing is clear and engaging and you will learn a lot.

- How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth, by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart – this is a must have resource; no Bible student should be without and it now comes as an e-book. Re-read the chapter for your particular type of passage when you start a new study.


Acknowledgements

All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

Many of the discussion questions for each passage are adapted from 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart by Dale Ralph Davis. Baker House books, 1988.

For more bible study resources and to listen to podcasts related to this study, visit:  
www.wednesdayintheword.com
# 1 Samuel at a Glance

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel detail the historical account of the emergence of the Israelite monarchy under Saul & David. The key issue is how Israel can have a human king within the context of a covenant relationship with God and without compromising the kingship of God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Main Character</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the Monarchy</td>
<td>God rules &amp; rescues His People</td>
<td>Chapters 1-7</td>
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<td>Beginning the Monarchy</td>
<td>The People demand a King</td>
<td>Chapters 8-12</td>
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<td>The People’s Choice</td>
<td>Reign &amp; rejection of Saul</td>
<td>Chapters 13-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>God’s Choice</td>
<td>Rise of David &amp; the fall of Saul</td>
<td>Chapters 16-31</td>
<td>David</td>
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## Psalms related to 1 & 2 Samuel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Psalm</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 19:11</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Saul sends men to watch David’s house in order to kill him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 21:10–11</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>The Philistines seize David in Gath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 21:12–22:1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>David delivered by feigning madness before King Achish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 22:1 or 24:3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>David flees from Saul into a cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 22:1 or 24:3</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>David flees from Saul into a cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 22:9–19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Doeg tells Saul that David went to the house of Ahimelech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 23:19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>The Ziphites tell Saul that David is hiding among them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam. 8:1–14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>David’s victory over Transjordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 11–12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Nathan confronts David about his adultery with Bathsheba</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 15–17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>David flees from and battles Absalom</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 15–17 or 1 Sam. 23:14–15</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>David in the desert of Judah</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>David delivered from enemies and from Saul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The words of Cush, a Benjaminite (persecution by Saul?)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
1 Samuel 1:1-2:11 Hannah

1. What have you learned about prayer in this passage? What do you find encouraging and what do you find difficult about prayer?

2. Do you think you are in danger of substituting “human gimmicks” for dependence on God?

3. Someone said, “Our despair … may be another prelude to a mighty work of God.” How have you seen illustrations of this idea in Scripture or your own experience?

4. Do you agree with the logic in this prayer: “Lord you said …, therefore please …”?

5. Which is your greatest concern for your younger family members: fame, prosperity or godliness?
1 Samuel 2:12-36 Eli

1. In your life, do you usually see God’s work in quiet ways or in dramatic ways?

2. “Someone may remain so firm in his rebellion that God will confirm him in it.” Do you think there is enough preaching about the need for repentance or too much?

3. Have you ever ended up in a disaster or sin because you thought it was more important to be nice? Reflect on this in the light of Matthew 10:37.

4. What qualities does Biblical love have the niceness lacks?

5. The new beginning with Samuel requires the ending of the line of Eli. What does this teach you about God’s character? About beginnings and endings?
1 Samuel 3 Samuel

1. Do you think God only speaks through the Bible today?

2. Starvation sometimes results not from lack of food but rather from lack of appetite. How would you describe your appetite for the Word of God?

3. “Once we see what Scripture reveals about God, we usually will see how it applies to us.” Do you agree with this statement or not?

4. What attributes of God’s character are revealed in this chapter? Are any of them unexpected or surprising to you?

5. If as they say “true preaching afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted”, which do you need most right now? Why?
1 Samuel 4 Ark Lost

1. Beside 1 Samuel 4, can you think of other examples from Scripture or your own life of attempts to encourage God to answer prayer a certain way?

2. What’s the difference between basing prayer on God’s promises and trying to receive a particular answer? Think this through carefully. In your own life, how would you act, think or pray differently?

3. Can you think of examples in your own experience, from Scripture or from other’s lives where God has acted both in judgment and in grace at the same time?

4. Consider 1 Samuel 4:22 and the saying that “sometimes God must depart from us in order for us to seek him rightly.” Do you agree or disagree?

5. Which do you think is the real tragedy in 1 Samuel 4: the death of Eli, Eli’s sons, or the loss of the ark? Why?
1 Samuel 5-6 Ark Returned

1. How do we understand the balance between two facts: God is totally self-sufficient and God graciously uses us in His service? Do you think this is a paradox?

2. The Philistines had evidently heard what happened to the Egyptians at the Exodus and it made them fearful. Do you think the church today has lost the fear of God’s judgment in favor of preaching the grace to forgive? Is this good or bad?

3. God demonstrated His power to the Philistines through the use of milk cows. Have you seen other instances in your life or Scripture where God used an unlikely person, animal or object to get your attention?

4. Do you think there’s a difference between intimacy and familiarity in our dealings with God? Why? Is that a good thing or not?

5. “Perhaps our greatest transgressions are not positive, but passive.” Do you agree or not?
1 Samuel 7 New Mercies

1. Why do you think God delivered Israel from the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7 and did not deliver them in 1 Samuel 4?

2. “True repentance requires concrete action.” Do you agree? Is the same true of faith?

3. Do you think true repentance results from divine or human effort?

4. How can we tell when someone has truly repented? How do we know in our own lives?

5. In 1 Samuel 7:12, Samuel sets a stone to remind the Israelites how God helped them. Do you have any “memorial stones” in your life? What do you do or could you do to remember how God has acted in your life or your family or church?
1 Samuel 8 The King Thing

1. Which do you think is more important today: “a mighty king” or “a faithful intercessor”?

2. Do you think God’s answers to our prayers usually take the same form? Why?

3. Do you think the church today struggles with being different from the society? Or is comfortable with being different? Or has lost the difference?

4. In what ways should Christians be different from non-Christians? In what ways should Christians be similar?

5. Can you think of times when God said “no” and you discovered later that was a good answer? Or when God said “yes” and you discovered later that this was a painful answer?
1 Samuel 9-10:16 Saul Found

1. Have there been times in your life when you have seen God turn several ordinary events into some wonderful blessing?

2. Do you think we should expect God to explain His ways to us so that we eventually understand what He is doing or not?

3. Can you think of unlikely people in Scripture or your own experience who have been greatly used by God? Or have been used in ways you never expected?

4. “We can clearly see surface matters like lost donkeys, and sometimes that is all we discern.” How can we learn to see more deeply into what God is doing?

5. Have you ever been seeking one thing, only to have God give you something else entirely?
1 Samuel 10:17-11 Saul’s Victory

1. What evidence do we have today that God is the one who delivers us from our calamities? Why are we tempted to doubt his deliverance?

2. Has God ever asked you do something you really didn’t want to do or felt completely inadequate to attempt? If so, what did you learn about God and/or yourself?

3. After asking God for a king, some Israelites fail to accept Saul as king until after the battle recorded in 1 Samuel 11. Were they right or wrong to wait for proof of God’s hand on Saul?

4. Do you think the Israelites trusted in the kingship or as Saul says in 11:13 that the Lord accomplished their deliverance? Do you think the church today trusts in institutions and church programs or the hand of the Lord? How would we know?

5. Where do you turn for deliverance when life gets too hard?
1 Samuel 12 Samuel’s Farewell

1. Review Samuel’s record of integrity in his leadership of Israel. Do you think he’s unique or typical of biblical leaders?

2. What does Samuel’s leadership teach you about the qualities we should seek in leaders today?

3. Review the pattern of “fearing the Lord” and “not listening to his voice” summarized in chapter 12. What does it teach you about God and yourself?

4. What does 12:20-22 teach you about sin, how we should react to our own sin, and the sins of others against us?

5. Consider 1 Samuel’s conclusion in 12:23-25. How would you apply that to your life today? Your church?
1 Samuel 13-15 Saul’s 1st Conflict

1. Do you agree with the saying: “helplessness is not necessarily hopelessness”?

2. Consider the departure of Samuel — the mouthpiece of God’s word — from Saul. Since most Christians today have constant access to the Word of God, how should we live differently?

3. Jonathan has been described as a “wise son of a foolish father.” Do you know other examples (from Scripture, biographies or people you know) of people who made good despite their upbringing? What does this teach you?

4. “For the Bible, covenant obedience matters far more than vocational achievement.” Do you believe that is true? How much of a reversal of the world’s values or your values is this?

5. What does Saul’s rejection teach you about God’s judgment, obedience and sacrifice?
1 Samuel 16 David

1. Consider the criteria God used when selecting David as the next king. What does it teach you about how we should select elders, deacons and other church leaders today?

2. Compare the selection of David (chapter 16) with the selection of Saul (chapters 8-9). Pay particular attention to the words of Lord in each chapter. What do these chapters

3. Consider how little changes for David after he is anointed by Samuel. What do you think David expected to change? What does this teach you about calling and knowing God’s will for your life?

4. If you face trouble or an obstacle in connection with your calling, does this mean you are not in the right place? How do you know?

5. Compare 16:7 with John 2:25 and Isaiah 53:1-3. Do you think we put too much stock in appearances today? What do you think we as a church should do differently?
1 Samuel 17 David & Goliath


2. David claims that God’s reputation is at stake and that matters enough to risk his life for it. How could/should we stand up for God’s reputation today?

3. What stance should we take toward those who mock God? How do we know whether to forgive or “go to battle”?

4. This chapter marks the first time we hear David speak. What do we learn about David’s character through his speech? How does his speech reflect on his qualifications for kingship?

5. Several characters regard David as too weak, too young and too inexperienced (Eliab vs 28), Saul (vs 33) and Goliath (vs 42). Have you ever been considered too weak for a task? How did you handle it?
1 Samuel 18-19 David & Saul

1. Notice that Jonathan’s esteem for David is placed side-by-side with Saul’s envy. Do you think this is a common reaction to someone who is used by God? Why?

2. Have you or someone you know ever been protected from dangers or failures of which you were unaware? What did you learn from the experience?

3. In this chapter, everyone — except Saul — seems to love David (Jonathan, Michael, Israel, Judah.) Why do you think David had so much affection and success? What do you think David was to learn to learn from this high regard?

4. Sometimes the clearest evidence that God has not deserted you is not that you are successfully past your trial, but that you are still on your feet in the middle of it.” Do you agree?

5. How much of David’s experience can we apply to our lives? How much of what God did for David is only true of the king? Or can we say that what God has done for David, he’ll do for me?
1 Samuel 20 Jonathan’s Aid

1. What’s the difference between a friendship and a covenant relationship?

2. If you are a Christian, you are a member of the people of God. Does that affect your life, your choices and your decisions?

3. Why do you think David sought help from Jonathan (the legitimate heir to the throne) when Saul (the king) was seeking David’s life? Was David foolish here?

4. Why do you think Jonathan handed over his place to his rival and promised to protect David? Was Jonathan foolish?

5. Biblical peace is not often a general tranquility but rather a rightness in the midst of much turmoil.” Do you agree? Do you think David and/or Jonathan had such peace? Why?
1 Samuel 21-22 David in Gath

1. List the convictions about God which David demonstrates in Psalm 34 and consider the relevance of each to his situation in Gath.

2. Why do you think God let David experience such desperation? What did David learn? What should we learn?

3. Do you think David was right or wrong to flee to the king of Gath? If David was wrong, why do you think God protected him in his foolishness?

4. What does David’s concern for his elderly parents teach us about David? About God?

5. Compare this story with Matthew 8:18-20. What does this teach about kingship & leadership?
1 Samuel 23-24, 26 Saul Spared

1. When you have a choice to make, how do you decide whether it is “providence” or “temptation”? What helps you discern the difference?

2. Receiving assurance and feeling assured may be two different things. Which should we put more confidence in and how do we tell the difference?

3. “Understanding sometimes has to wait, but obedience cannot.” Do you agree?

4. Why do you think David chose not to seize the kingship? What do you think David learned through waiting? Have you had to wait for God’s blessing in your life? What did you learn?

5. Have you had to wait for God’s blessing in your life? What did you learn?
1 Samuel 25 Abigail

1. Suppose it was alleged that in this story David is simply carrying on a “protection racket.” What would you say in his defense?

2. God’s restraining action is mentioned four times (vs 26, 33, 34, 39). Can you think of times in your own life when God’s providential intervention saved you from a wrong choice? Do you think such interventions are frequent or rare?

3. Compare Abigail and Nabal, paying particular attention to their direct speech and what that reveals about them.

4. Note that in chapter 24 David restrains from killing Saul, but in chapter 25 David must be restrained from killing Nabal. Why do you think David was inconsistent? What does this teach us?

5. How do you think Abigail felt about becoming one of David’s wives? Would she see this as a blessing or a trial?
1 Samuel 27,29 Philistines

1. Do you think David was right or wrong to flee to the Philistines?

2. What’s the difference between prudence and unbelief?

3. Do you think it is significant that there is no mention of God in chapter 27 and only minimal mention in chapter 29? Why?

4. In 27:1 David claims he will “perish by the hand of Saul.” How do you think he came to this conclusion?

5. Have you ever been tempted to give up on God? If so, how did you get through it?
1 Samuel 30 Amalekites

1. Consider all David has been through since being anointed king. Why do you think God put David through so many trials? Should God have exempted his King from such a life?

2. Note vs 6 “David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” How do you think David did this?

3. Some of David’s men claim (vs 22) “Whoever does not fight does not eat.” Why are they wrong? How does David know they are wrong? How would that apply to the church today?

4. Do you think grace has matters more at the beginning of the Christian life or through the whole course of the Christian life?

5. “Little providences make big differences” - such as finding the Egyptian slave. Can you think of other instances from the Bible or your own life where God used a seeming coincidence to make a big difference?
1 Samuel 28,31 Saul’s defeat

1. Consider vs 15. Saul despised God’s word and God took it from him. Why do you think God was silent?

2. Compare David’s dilemma in chapter 27 with Saul’s dilemma in chapter 28. Which is worse?

3. Do you think Jonathan’s death in chapter 31 is a tragedy?

4. List the main lessons you’ve learned from the book of 1 Samuel.