

Mind

Presence of Christ

1 Samuel 2:18-26 | Session 7.53

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- Review the story of Hannah and the birth and dedication of Samuel in 1 Samuel 1.
- Research current events on the Internet, or use the in-session links to review some issues you may wish to discuss while establishing your context.

Context

Take a few minutes to discuss a few recent events, such as the [Starbucks cup controversy](#) and the [U.S. response to resettling refugees](#), then ask questions like:

- In what ways have prominent people who claim to be Christian responded to current events and why?
- Why might it be a bad thing for some Christians to openly discriminate against members of other faiths, or protest so stringently over perceived slights to their own?
- In what ways might responses to current events have helped or hindered the good news of Christ we've proclaimed this Christmas?

- How is it possible to uphold the truth of Jesus' life and message, while still honoring the love and grace that he embodied?

Content

Read [1 Samuel 2:18-26](#) , then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- Samuel would become an important figure in Israel's history – anointing two kings (Saul and David) and leading the people into an era of political and religious renewal. What things might Samuel have learned as a boy serving in the temple that other boys his age would not?
- What lessons – both positive and negative – might he have been learning from Eli?
- As a high priest Eli had much responsibility for the spiritual welfare of God's people. Why do you think he decided not to take action against his sons when they didn't listen to him?
- As sons of a priest, Hophni and Phineas, like Samuel, must have spent some of their childhood in God's house. Why might they have turned out differently from Samuel?
- What damage were Eli's sons doing to the people and to God's reputation by their actions?
- In what ways was Eli implicated in his sons' actions?
- Why do you think that ministers and religious workers should be held to a higher standard of behavior than others?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- What has someone done or said recently, either speaking on behalf of or about a faith that has most troubled or uplifted you and why?
- In what ways are we responsible for others' spiritual welfare?

- Considering this, how do our actions – even when we feel like we’re “standing up” for Christian values – impact the way others see God?
- What message does it send to the world when Christ-followers speak out against secular governments and companies, but not against Christian leaders who might act or speak in ways that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus?
- How can we respond to these kinds of abuses – on social media and in our individual relationships – in a way that upholds God’s holiness, love and grace?

Close with prayer, asking that God would give us the courage to be good representatives of Christ – living out all of Christ’s message – to our neighbors and our world.

Writer: Jon Parks

Current

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Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Have any selected video or music clips ready to show
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)

Context

Show the [Time Magazine's Person of the Year](#) video and ask questions like:

- If you were able to pick the person of the year, by what criteria would you narrow your candidates and why?
- The magazine representative said, speaking of Donald Trump, "If he who breaks all the rules lives to play another day, then he writes the new rules." How do you feel about that?
- As usual, leaders, activists, terrorists, politicians made the list of possible winners for Person of the Year. What does this list say about the world we live in?
- Angela Merkel's success was described by saying, "No one was tested the way she was... she stepped up in a way that was uncharacteristic, even for her." In what ways do we expect leaders to be tested?

Content

Read [1 Samuel 2:18–26](#) , then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- What do you think childhood was really like for Samuel and why?
- What lessons do you think Samuel learned about people through this particular situation?
- What do you think it must be like to be in a position where you are trying to serve God by being supervised by people who clearly are not?
- How do you feel about Eli’s role in this story and why?
- The Bible background video stated that “there is a responsibility in all of us to care for the next generation of leaders so they will grow into strong and kind leaders.” In what ways are we meeting that responsibility?
- How could we better move past our immediate desires to better nurture the next generation?

Closure

Show the video of [A Boy and A Man](#) and ask

- What most stands out to you as you view the interaction between these two people?
- What do you think it meant to both people to actually be heard by someone?
- In what ways is this kind of interaction important when we are raising young leaders?
- The man expresses great sorrow and the boy reacts to it. Yet, even in sharing sorrow, the man nurtures the boy. Think about the “Eli” people in our churches. Do our “Eli” people get an opportunity to share their experiences, even their sorrows?
- What might the “Samuel” people in our churches learn from this kind of interaction?

- What do you think it would be like if young leaders were invited to congregational meetings and invited to serve alongside people who are decades older than them?
- What might it be like if we asked them questions in those meetings, and responded to their answers?

Close by asking everyone to picture a child, one who is not their immediate family and pray silently for that child.

Writer: Erin Robinson Hall

Mystic

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Before the Session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- **Pictures of children (groups and or individuals; at least one per person in your group)**
- **Paper or handout with colloquy prompts as indicated below, pens**

Context

Read [1 Samuel 2:18-26](#) , then watch the Bible Background Video.

Colloquy

A colloquy is an imagined dialog/conversation between yourself and a biblical character. Invite people to imagine that they meet the young 9 year old Samuel on a break from his temple work. Journal a conversation with him. Instruct them to use the following prompts for their conversation (note: you may want to print these on a poster or a handout):

I ask Samuel about his work. I say ...

He responds ...

I ask Samuel what he likes about his work. I say ...

He responds ...

I ask Samuel what he thinks is important in life ...

He responds ...

I ask Samuel what his greatest hope/dream is ...

He responds ...

Invite people to share their colloquies with the group.

Visio Divina

A visio divina is a visual meditation in God's presence. We will be reflecting on pictures of children in this exercise.

Invite each person to choose one picture to reflect on for 10 minutes. Give the following instructions:

Take some moments to silently look at your picture.

- What do you notice the most about the child?
- What does this child need from the adults in his/her world? (jot these things down on a piece of paper – make as extensive a list as possible)
- Circle those things you have at your disposal to share with children.

Spend some moments talking with God about this child, our world, your resources.

Share your thoughts and feelings. Bring any requests to God's heart. Listen for any specific ways God might be inviting you to minister to the children around you.

Invite people to share their insights from the reflection.

Close with group prayer.

Writer: Joy Yee

Media

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Before the Session

- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).

Context

Play the [Cold is Contagious](#) video and ask questions like:

- In what ways has this video affected the way you feel about cold and why?
- If you are influenced by the shivering around you, what does that mean you should do to avoid feeling cold?
- How hard do you think it is to avoid the influence of cold and why?
- How hard is it to avoid the influence of chaos, confusion, and distraction in our world today and why?

Content

Read [1 Samuel 2:18-26](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- How would you have functioned in this dysfunctional religious environment where Samuel found himself and why?

- How do you Hannah felt with him there?
- To what degree do you think she was affected by the less than desirable example that Eli's sons were setting for Samuel?
- Why do you think it significant that Hannah had more children?
- How do you feel about the "death" language in regards to Eli's sons and why?
- So how do you think Samuel avoided being tainted by tainted by Eli's sons?
- When you look at the world today, what makes you most feel like Samuel in this situation and why?

Closure

Play the ["The Martian" TV promo](#) and ask.

- What do you think it would be like to be stranded on another planet?
- In what ways would it be the same or different as being stranded on *this* planet?
- Without ruining the movie for others, how do you think he kept up hope?
- How can we keep up hope when things do not look great?
- In what ways does Samuel's story speak to our own hopes for the future and why?
- Given that much of the world looks at all people of faith as this passage looked at Eli's sons, what can we do to be agents of the hope that God has given us through Jesus Christ?

Close with a prayer that includes something like: "May we all remember that every new life on this planet can become a key to transforming humanity into God's image and likeness. May we all work to help each new generation to press on...."

Close in prayer

Writer: Jon Self

Youth

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- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session them ahead of their gathering.

Intro

Play the ["Scrooge at His Worst" clip](#) and ask questions like:

- What do you think of Scrooge's approach to life and why?
- How would you feel about him if you knew him or had to work with him and why?
- What lessons did Scrooge learn by the end of this story?
- Who do you think are today's version of Scrooge in real life and why?
- What do you care about most in your life?
- In what ways do your actions show that you care for it?

Context

Play a game of [“Would you Rather...?”](#) by explaining that you will give each person two choices, and they have to choose which of the two options they would rather experience. You may choose to form groups of eight to twelve people to play this game separately if you have a very large group. Give people a chance to explain their choices, if they wish, before moving the next person.

Use questions like these, or invent some of your own:

- Would you rather have more time or more money?
- Would you rather have a rewind button or a pause button on your life?
- Would you rather win the lottery or live twice as long?
- Would you rather no one show up to your wedding, or no one show up to your funeral?
- Would you rather go without Internet for a week, or without your phone?
- Would you rather become someone else or stay you?
- Would you rather make a phone call or a text?
- Would you rather be the most popular or the smartest?
- Would you rather lose your keys or your cell phone?
- Would you rather be too busy or be bored?
- Would you rather have parents too strict or parents too lenient?
- Would you rather have many good friends or one best friend?
- Would you rather get something for Christmas or give something for Christmas?

Once everyone has had a chance to make a choice and explain it, regather the group and ask questions like:

- What do you think your choices in this activity say about you?
- Why might someone think that they always know what is best for herself or himself?
- On a scale of 1–10 how often do you think you make stupid decisions?
- What do you think is driving that desire to make bad decisions?
- How many of the struggles that you face are the result of your own poor choices?
- In what ways do the choices you make affect your faith?

Content

Read [1 Samuel 2:18–26](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- What did Eli’s sons do wrong and why did it merit “destruction?”
- What do you think about the way Eli confronted his sons?
- How do you usually respond when your parents go into lecture mode and why?
- How did Samuel gain God’s favor?
- What did Samuel gain by the way he chose to live?
- What role do you think Samuel’s parents played in his choices?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- How did Samuel become a great religious figure, considering the examples he was given?

- What kinds of drama do you typically face that would be considered undesirable circumstances, and how do you keep it from turning you into someone you might not want to be?

Read [James 1:12-27](#) and continue by asking:

- What light do you think this passage sheds on Samuel's story?
- What light do you think it sheds on your own story and why?
- In what ways can you be God's agent for change in your community while still holding a place as a member of that community?
- What role does your faith play in you being different?

Close this session in prayer.

Writer: Don Breeden

Mix

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Context (From the Media Session Page)

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Closure (from the Current Session page)

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