Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult Title: Samuel: God's Prophet and Judge
Adult Topic: A Virtuous Leader

Lesson 11: November 15, 2026

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50–58
Adult Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 7:3–17
Adult Print Passage: 1 Samuel 7:3–11, 15–17

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov 9	*M*	*2 Peter 3:9-13*	*Though We Sin, God Is Patient*
Nov 10	*T*	*Colossians 2:8-15*	*Avoid Worldly Entanglements*
Nov 11	*W*	*Deuteronomy 20:1-9*	*The Lord Gives You Victory*
Nov 12	*Th*	*James 1:1-12*	*Remain Steadfast under Trial*
Nov 13	*F*	*Psalm 34:15-22*	*God Hears and Rescues*
Nov 14	*Sa*	*2 Chronicles 7:12-16*	*God Will Hear and Forgive*
Nov. 15	*Su*	*1 Sam. 7:3-11, 15-17*	*Cry to God for Deliverance*

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner
Celebration – "Take My Life, and Let It Be" - #470 *AME Zion Bicentennial Hymn*
Declaration – 1 Samuel 7:3–11, 15–17 *(Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)*

Samuel as Judge
3 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." 4 So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the Lord only.

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you." 6 So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord. They fasted that day and said, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 The Israelites said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 So Samuel took a

sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. [10] As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel, but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel. [11] And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

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[15] Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. [16] He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. [17] Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel and built there an altar to the Lord.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

God provided Israel with Samuel's wise and faithful leadership as prophet and judge, calling Israel to spiritual renewal and military readiness.

Discuss how you would define a virtuous leader. What is usually the impact of a strong and virtuous leader on the people under her or him? What do good leaders tend to do to help calm our fears, find signs of hope in moving forward? What particular leaders have you known to act wisely and guide the people in conquering fears and facing up to threatening situations?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

1 Samuel 7:3-9: Israel's repentance at Samuel's urging is a repetition of its behavior on many occasions before. The period of the judges is marked by cycles of prosperity, sin and idolatry, divine punishment at the hands of an invader, and the raising of a judge who leads in repentance and deliverance. Samuel was probably a contemporary of Samson, who judged Israel for 20 years (mostly around Judah) and battled the Philistines. (See Judges 13–16.) Samson's death was likely only a short time before the Israelites gathered at Mizpah. "Samuel the man of prayer was able to accomplish what Samson the man of strength could not accomplish" (James E. Smith, OT Survey Series: The Books of History, © 1995). While some archaeologists have concluded that the worship of Ashtoreth was part of the ancient worship of Yahweh, this passage makes it clear that while such practice did sometimes occur, it was a perversion of the true worship of Yahweh. Partly because the worship of Baal and Ashtareths involved sexual acts, idolatry in Israel was labeled spiritual adultery. With Shiloh having suffered destruction at the hands of the Philistines in the aftermath of the Israelite loss in Chapter 4, Israel could no longer sacrifice there. Mizpah, " A town in Benjamin seven miles north of Jerusalem and eight miles northeast of Kiriath-jearim..., played a prominent role in Israel before the monarchy (10:17; Judges 20:1; 21:1, 5, 8). It was one of the regular stops in Sam-

uel's circuit (v. 16). The name, meaning something like 'place of watching,' implies a high vantage point and was given to a number of sites (e.g., 22:3)" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). "The words and actions (v. 4) of the Israelites give evidence of true repentance. The time is ripe for the Lord to deliver His people from their Philistine oppressors. The response of the Philistines to the convocation at Mizpah (v. 7) provides an opportunity for this deliverance" (Ibid).

1Samuel 7:10-10-11, 15-17: As in the Book of Judges, the Lord intervenes on behalf of Israel when they repent from their sin. Repentance, in this historical context, is often accompanied by confession of sin and fasting as signs of penitence and pouring out of water as a sign of contrition. Samuel could visit the three cities mentioned on his circuit and return home to Ramah in a trip of 35-40 miles. While Samuel "judged Israel all the days of his life" (v. 15), his role was less official in his latter years, as Saul was then reigning as king. The statement that the Lord thundered against the Philistines "dramatically recalls the earlier words of Hannah that 'the adversaries... shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven' (2:10; compare 2 Samuel 22:14). Hannah's words are immediately preceded by the statement that 'not by might shall a man prevail' (2:9). Human strength is of little consequence when the Lord decides to act" (Ibid.). "As Samuel sacrifices, the Philistines draw near, but the Lord sends loud thunder and puts them into great panic. The men of Israel pursue and slaughter them.... Samuel, knowing that the Lord alone has delivered them, wishes Israel to remember this and sets up a stone called Ebenezer. This means, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.' With a godly leader, renewed repentance, and wholehearted commitment of the people, it is inevitable that God's great grace and intervention change things. The Philistines are subdued so they do not invade Israel again, and their towns are recaptured. Israel also delivers the neighboring territory from the Philistines and there is peace with the Amorites. Samuel's godly ministry as judge over Israel is lifelong. He performs his task, both on a circuit and in his hometown of Ramah, where he builds an altar to the Lord" (Bible Panorama).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

A good leader responds to the people's cries for help by guiding the people back to God–so that the relationship between God and God's people can be restored. Samuel grew up to be a wise and faithful leader. He became a prophet–giving and interpreting God's word to the people. He also was a priest–he led them in worship. With this thinking in mind, break into small groups and express your thinking on the following: 1. God calls leaders who will be faithful to God's priorities. 2. When God calls us to leadership, God gives us the gifts we need. It is our choice how we use those gifts. 3. God's expectation of faithful leaders is that they will make decisions based upon God's best intentions for the whole people of God. A faithful leader helps reorient people and society according to God's priorities. 4. Leadership is not just telling people what to

do, it is inviting people to join God's ongoing work in the world. 5. God calls leadership who walk and work with God's people to bring out the best in all of us. 6. Leadership in God's realm is mutual and reciprocal not hierarchical.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Show the group the list you made in Lesson 1, September 6, 2026, of leadership qualities that would be helpful based on Israel's situation at that time. How has Israel's situation changed? What leadership qualities would be helpful for the current situation? How are their needs under Samuel's leadership similar to and different from what they needed in a leader under Joshua in Lesson 1?

2. Read 1 Samuel 7:3–17. How does Samuel demonstrate faithfulness to God? How does Samuel encourage the people to be faithful to God? Ask participants to draw an image or write a description of how the people responded when Samuel encouraged them to return faithfulness to God. Ask for volunteers to share their image or description.

3. Discuss how the people of Israel, with Samuel's encouragement, showed their faithfulness to God. How is this similar to or different from how we demonstrate faithfulness to God in our context?

4. Ask participants to think about a time that they felt distant from God. What caused them to feel this separation? How did they find their way back to God? Or if they are still feeling distant from God, what is one step that they could take to move closer to God? Ask if anyone feels comfortable talking about their experience.

5. Read Matthew 6:7–13. Ask the group why they think Jesus encouraged us to ask for forgiveness when we pray. What role does confessing our sins play in building and maintaining our relationship with God?

6. Ask the participants to imagine that they, like the people of Israel, need God's help. Encourage participants to think about what is needed o help with and how they might ask God for help. Offer some time for people to walk around inside or outside of the church (or their homes if you are teaching virtually) to think about this. Give them a time when they need to return to the group. When participants have returned, ask them to imagine they have cried out to God for help and God has responded. Encourage participnts to write a journal entry about how it feels to know that God cares and is on their side.

Key Verse: Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 1 Samuel 7:15