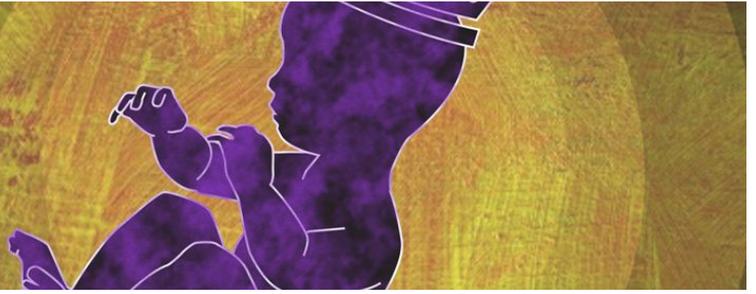


GREAT EXPECTATIONS



The narrative of scripture is punctuated with stories of birth. Every new life is special, but God's Word tells us about a number of babies who entered the world under remarkable or even miraculous circumstances, each carrying with them the hopes of others, and each ushering in the next chapter in the story of God. Their lives and ministries foreshadowed the birth of another, one who would assume the expectations of all. "Chains shall He break, and in His name, all oppression shall cease."

LIFEGroup Gathering Guide

Week 3 - Samuel

Getting Started

- *Larger LIFEGroups may consider splitting into same gender groups in order to facilitate more meaningful discussion.*
- *Groups will not have enough time to discuss every question. Leaders are encouraged to skip questions and make substitutions based on what's best for their group.*

Warm Ups (15 Min)

- Everyone share a "High" from the week and a "Low" from the week.
- If there's one person from history that you'd like to meet, who would it be?

Scripture Study (30 Min)

- In 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah barter for a son. She is in distress and desperate, but is bartering with God a theologically sound practice?
- Samuel is one of the most fascinating people in scripture. He was the last of the Judges, a prophet, and king-maker. Nobody questioned his authority, even over King Saul. Read 1 Samuel 15.
- When considering why God would require total annihilation in many Old Testament battles, Deuteronomy can help us understand His reasons for doing so. Read Deuteronomy 4:25-26 and 9:4-6. What values of God emerge from the text? Is God playing favorites?

- How important was obedience for Saul? How about Samuel?
- How important is obeying God's Word to you? Do you make yourself loopholes? Are you overly permissive? Do you say things like "love is what's most important" in order to get out of the hard conversations that are sometimes made necessary through sticking to God's Word? Is there any area in which God might be calling you to greater respect for His directives?
- Samuel seemed to do whatever job God put before him, even personally executing Agag to correct Saul's blunder. He was the right man for almost any job, and seemed to dabble in all three of the major offices listed in the Old Testament (Prophet, Priest, and King).
- Question: "Am I well rounded enough in the knowledge, character, and skills of a disciple of Jesus, that God could ask me to serve in a variety of ways?" Where do I need work?
- Samuel was an incredible example of serving humbly, doing any work asked of him, never compromising truth. His example is one of integrity. Yet, his sons did not follow in his footsteps - scripture describes them as dishonest. His ministry foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus, who holds each of the threefold offices in full, obeying God the father even to the point of death in order to bring restoration to the world. He came that all of God's Children might repent of their sins, turn, and respond to the call to "follow" in Jesus' footsteps.

Group Prayer (15 Min)

Trios (20 Min)

Same gender groups of three. If numbers are uneven, go to groups of two.

- **Spiritual Velocity:**
 - How did you see God at work in your life this week?
 - What has God been teaching you in His Word as you've encountered it in this week's Life Journal readings, Sunday message, or LIFEGroup study?
 - What's an area of your life in which you know you need to repent or grow? How can we encourage you?
- **Joining Jesus on His Mission:**
 - What kind of conversations are you having with non-Christians? How's your 3-2-1 challenge going? Share about connections you're building and spiritual conversations you're having with non-believing neighbors and friends.
 - List the names of non-Christians in your life that you can pray for:
_____.
 - What good can we do around here? (Missional party? Service project?)
 - How can we help each other, our neighbors, and our city in prayer?



LIFEGroup Relational Guidelines

TIME: Please be sensitive about the amount of time you share. Group time is limited.

I will seek to avoid conversation dominating.

LISTENING: We seek to cultivate a group culture in which everyone can be real and open about their struggles and celebrations. If we feel like we must normally “wear a mask,” this is an environment in which we are encouraged to “take it off.”

I commit to being an understanding listener. I will not hold side conversations while you are sharing. Before responding; I will first seek to listen to you all the way through. If your struggles are emotional, financial, legal, medical, relational, spiritual, sexual, or any other, I endeavor not to be surprised. I endeavor not to offer advice without your permission.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

I promise to hold your words in confidence. They stay with me.

“I” STATEMENTS: It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use “I” statements rather than “you”, “them”, “they”, etc.

SELF-AWARENESS: Be aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

SILENCE: Can play an important role in group discussion as it allows for people to process the topic or question being considered. Don’t always jump right in - give people a moment.

CONFLICT: We will resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we make sure to honor God and each other in the ways that resolve issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard:

- If someone sins against you - *Matthew 18:15-20*
- Restoring someone in sin - *Galatians 6:1-5*
- Forgive a sinner - *Colossians 3:12-13*

Reconciling differences - *Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5*