

Samuel Becomes a Helper in the Tabernacle



Scripture Reference: [1 Samuel 1:21-2:26](#)

Suggested Theme: God loves children and is pleased when they want to serve Him. Children can help serve God.

Memory Verse: “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are like these children.’” [Matthew 19:14, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Hannah did not forget the promise that she had made to the Lord. After her son, Samuel, was weaned, she took him to the Tabernacle and presented him to Eli, the High Priest. Samuel’s parents returned home, but Samuel remained with Eli to be a helper. Samuel would have cleaned and run errands and lots of other jobs to help the priests. Hannah made a new robe for Samuel every year and brought it to him when she and Elkanah visited the Tabernacle.

Background Study:

Samuel came on the scene at the end of the time of the judges. He was the last judge.

[Click here for The Book of Judges: The Big Picture](#)

Samuel was taken to live at the Tabernacle when he was weaned (probably three or four years old). As a child, he helped the high priest, Eli, with jobs around the Tabernacle. Although his parents had given him to Eli to raise in the Lord’s service, they never forgot him.

What tender, loving care Samuel’s parents must have given him as they fulfilled his basic needs for love, food, and clothing. We can only guess how often they thought about and missed their child after he was placed in Eli’s care in the Tabernacle. Hannah made Samuel a long, loose robe- a coat- to wear over his tunic each year. Hannah and Elkanah delivered the coat when they went to the Tabernacle to offer yearly sacrifices. They made a personal sacrifice by offering their young son to the Lord’s service! 1 Samuel 2:5 reveals that Hannah went on to have five more children after Samuel.

As Samuel grew, he was given responsibilities in the Tabernacle. Whenever he was serving, he would wear a linen ephod (ee-fod). This was a sleeveless, close-fitting pullover garment, usually about hip length. It was worn by all who served in the sanctuary of the Lord.

As a boy, Samuel would stay in the Tabernacle all night. He probably ensured that the seven-branched golden lampstand lamps did not go out before the sun came up. (See [Exodus 27:20-21](#); [Leviticus 24:1-4](#)), Another duty was to open the doors of the Tabernacle each morning. ([1 Samuel 3:15](#)).

The Tabernacle was the holy tent where God met His people in worship from the time of Moses until the Great Temple was built in Jerusalem many years after Samuel's death. The Lord commanded that the finest materials be used in making this tent: gold, silver, bronze, red and purple cloth, soft leather, spices, rubies, sapphires and topaz. The Tabernacle was indeed an awesome sight.

A large courtyard constructed of linen curtains surrounded the tent. In this court stood an altar for burnt offerings and a large basin where the priests washed their hands.

The most important place was the tent itself. It had a wooden frame and was covered with soft animal skins. Inside, the walls were hung with rich tapestries, and a veil divided the space in half. In front of the veil stood a table where an offering of bread was placed. Behind the veil was the Ark of the Covenant, the gold-covered box in which the Ten Commandments were stored. All of these things became a huge part of Samuel's life.

In contrast to Samuel's genuine devotion to God was the growing misconduct of Eli's own sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Even though they, too, had grown up in the atmosphere of the Tabernacle, they were proving to be more and more of an embarrassment and disappointment to their father, Eli.

"Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the Lord and with men" ([1 Samuel 2:26](#)).

For more about Samuel's beginnings, see [God Answers Hannah's Prayer](#) and [The Lord Speaks to Samuel](#).

Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring cleaning supplies to the gathering today, and let the children help clean your area. If you have some brass or silver items, bring them so the children can polish them. "Eli was a priest in God's special tent - the Tabernacle. He and his helpers had to make sure it was always clean. There was furniture to polish and lamp stands and plates to keep shiny. There was always work to do. Let's find out about a special helper that lived with Eli."

The Story:

Hannah and Elkanah loved their son very much. Hannah remembered how it used to be before Samuel was born. She used to be so unhappy. She used to cry because she did not have a baby.

Hannah remembered how she had prayed for a baby at the tabernacle in Shiloh. While she had prayed, the High Priest, Eli, had seen her. In her prayer, Hannah had made a promise to the Lord:

"Dear Lord, if you will give me a son then I will promise to give him back to you so he can be a helper to you."

As Samuel grew bigger daily, Hannah knew that the time would come when she had to keep her promise to the Lord. She knew that soon, she would have to take Samuel to the Tabernacle to help the Lord.

Finally, the time came. Samuel was not a baby any more. It was time to take him to Eli, the priest, at Shiloh. Hannah knew Eli would take care of Samuel and teach him how to help at the Tabernacle. Samuel's parents knew that he was a good boy and that he would serve the Lord all of his life. Elkanah and Hannah travelled to Shiloh to find Eli at the Tabernacle.

"Do you remember me, Eli?" asked Hannah. "I am the woman you saw praying at the Tabernacle. God answered my prayer! This is Samuel, my son. He will be a helper. Please teach Samuel to be a special helper to the Lord."

Eli was very happy to see Samuel. He promised to take good care of him. Eli was very old and needed someone to help him while he was the High Priest.

It was difficult to say goodbye, but Samuel was happy to be a helper. He wanted to do a good job and make his parents proud. Every year, when Elkanah and Hannah visited Samuel, they brought him a special gift. They would always bring a special coat that Hannah had made for her son. Samuel would have been proud to wear this coat.

Eli probably taught him how to do many jobs in the Tabernacle. Samuel was allowed to light the special lamps and ensure they never burned out. He got to be the one to open the tabernacle each morning. Sometimes, he was even allowed to sleep in the Tabernacle tent. Samuel probably thought a lot about the Lord when he cleaned the lamps. Samuel did not just want to do work. He wanted to do things that would make the Lord proud of him.

Sometimes, Eli was sad. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, did not obey the Lord. People did not like Eli's sons because they were mean. Eli must have wished that they could obey the Lord as Samuel did.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:

<http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/samuel-listens/>

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- Why did Hannah and Elkanah take Samuel to live in Shiloh? (Hannah had promised God that her son would be a helper for the Lord)
- What gift did Hannah bring to Samuel every year? (A new coat)
- What kind of things did Samuel do to help Eli? (He might have cleaned the lamps in the tabernacle, kept the lamps lit, opened the tabernacle in the mornings, and even sometimes slept in the tabernacle)
- Can children help serve and love God? (Yes)
- What were Eli's two sons like? (They were mean, and they did not obey the Lord)
- What did you learn about people or God from this story?

Reflection:

- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- What colours do you think were in the tabernacle? What would you have liked to look at?
- How do you think Samuel felt when his mother and father first brought him to live at the tabernacle and his parents went home?
- Would you have liked to live in the tabernacle with Eli and his sons?
- How do you think Eli felt about having Samuel as a helper and living in the tabernacle with him?
- How do you think Samuel felt about getting to help serve God in the tabernacle?
- In what ways have you helped God or served people?
- What ideas do you have for helping serve God or serve other people? What about people in your house, your community, your school or your church?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Samuel Song](#)
- [Yes! Jesus Loves Me](#)
- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- List ways children can help in the church today.
- Use the learning activity [Draw Out an Idea](#) to talk about the characters in this story.
- Look up pictures of the Tabernacle in Bible Encyclopaedias.
- As a group project, do something to help the church (clean windows or pews, straighten songbooks, sweep the footpaths, clean the kitchen, etc.)
- Have the children write a checklist of daily tasks that Samuel might have had. This includes things like cleaning the lampstands, sweeping, shaking out and dusting curtains, bringing the priests their food, etc.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Build a model of the Tabernacle.
- Have children draw the tabernacle and some furnishings using a large piece of paper.
- Choose a word or name from the story and outline the letters of that word. Have children fill the letters with thoughts and ideas you learned in the Bible story.
- Make a miniature-size model of the story. If you teach over several weeks, you could add to the model to form a collection that reviews the stories. You can place the models in boxes. One box could display one judge. Samuel Box- (Covering three Samuel stories) Picture of mum and baby, baby items, sewing items, little coat, tabernacle pictures or model, picture of sleeping boy, pillow and blanket . . .

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the stories of Samuel’s birth and being a helper in the temple\) at http://gardenofpraise.com/](http://gardenofpraise.com/)

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