

Home Study

SUMMER QUARTER

June, July, August 2022



Union
Gospel
Press

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Servants and Healers

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Called to Serve

MEGAN HICKMAN

In our first unit, we study both famous and obscure servants of the Lord. We see that no role is too small to perform in God's kingdom.

In lesson 1, we study the calling of Samuel, who bridged the gap between God's judges and Israel's monarchy. Samuel was called to serve God from a young age. Because of this, he made a great impact on the nation of Israel.

Next, we look to the calling of the prophet Isaiah and how his vision of God's holiness motivated his whole ministry. Isaiah was called to preach to the people of Israel during a seemingly hopeless period, so his belief in God's worthiness would fuel his ministry in difficult times.

But Isaiah was not the only one who was discouraged in his service. In Psalm 73, we read about Asaph's struggle with the prosperity of the wicked and the seeming absence of God's justice. But even though Asaph did not always see God working, the psalmist still trusted His character.

Finally, for the last lesson of unit I, we look at the ministry of Ezra, who had to encourage the people of Israel to rebuild the temple after the Captivity. God's people had given way to discouragement and possibly even laziness. They needed to be exhorted to reprioritize the Lord in their lives. God used Ezra along with other godly and even ungodly leaders to bring His people to repentance.

God had brought His people back to

their land by the decree of the pagan king Cyrus, and He also gave them the support of the ruler Darius, which allowed them to rebuild the temple. These kings, the prophets, and the leaders all served God to bring about the rebuilding of the temple.

In unit II, we study faithful prophets who delivered difficult messages from the Lord. They had to rebuke the people of Israel and give them prophecies of hope during hopeless times. Historically, the prophets' messages were not well received.

In lesson 5, we go back in time four years and take a closer look at Haggai's rebuke that motivated the people to rebuild the temple. Then we look at one of Micah's prophecies, in which he pronounced judgment on God's people and criticized their entitlement. Their messages were not easy messages to deliver, but the prophets were faithful to the Lord and told the people what they needed to hear.

The prophet Habakkuk provided a slightly different example of prophetic service when he praised God in the midst of his discouragement. He rejoiced in God even while he was distressed over the suffering of Israel.

To finish unit II, we have a message of hope from Ezekiel during the Captivity, in which he encouraged God's people that He would be faithful to restore them. Any hope of restoration was probably somewhat unbelievable for his audience. But God used

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Ezekiel's vision of dry bones to point to His promise to restore His people and give them life once again.

Through God's prophets, we see a pattern of encouragement and rebuke, but no matter what He was saying, it is important to note that God was speaking to His people. These prophets served Israel not only by telling its people what to do but by showing them that God wanted a relationship with them—which He ultimately showed by sending His Son.

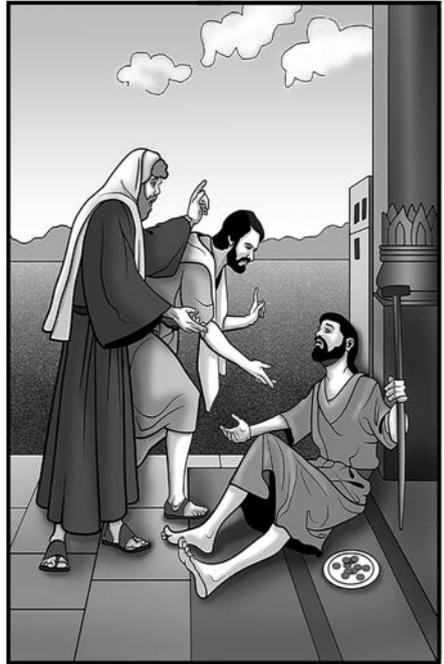
In our last unit, we study how God used healers to spread the gospel to all nations. In the Scriptures, healing testified to the power of God. If people were going to believe the gospel, which claims that God has the power to resurrect both Jesus and all believers from the grave, they had to believe first in God's power over all things.

First, we look at a healing performed by God's ultimate servant, Jesus Christ. We see God's compassion for the Gentiles as Jesus healed both a centurion's servant and two Gentile demoniacs.

But Jesus did not stop at healing people's bodies; He also healed people spiritually as they put their faith in Him after seeing a demonstration of His power. Those He did heal could not keep quiet about what He had done for them.

In lesson 11, Peter healed a man who was lame from birth. Then he took advantage of the people's attention and pointed to the truth of Christ's resurrection. Peter was serving and preaching even to those who had called for Jesus' crucifixion.

In lesson 12, we see the bravery of a man named Ananias as he obeyed God by approaching the Christian persecutor Saul of Tarsus. Saul had just had an encounter with God and had been struck blind. Ananias not only healed Saul's blindness but also welcomed him into Christian community. Because of his brave submission to God's will, Ananias was given the priv-



ilege of welcoming one of Jesus' most influential disciples.

Finally, we fast forward to the healing ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul showed others God's power through healing and preaching of His Word. Though the people of Malta thought that Paul himself was a god, he pointed them to the true, all-powerful Creator. Through faithful preaching and healing, these servants of God showed others the power of the gospel and brought many to Christ, establishing God's church for generations to come.

The ways we serve God today might look different from the ways these men served God in our quarter's studies. But there is one consistent theme among them—they were all faithful to their various callings. Whether God calls us to something big or small, we should all view our tasks in His kingdom as important, looking not to our own glory but to His alone.

Scripture Lesson Text

I SAM. 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision.*

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that he could not see;*

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep;*

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, *Here am I.*

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, *Here am I;* for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, *Here am I;* for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, *Here am I;* for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So

Samuel went and lay down in his place.

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established *to be* a prophet of the LORD.

7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, *If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, *Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.*

Samuel's Call and Ministry

Lesson Text: I Samuel 3:1-9, 19-20; 7:3-5, 10, 12

Related Scriptures: I Samuel 1:1-28; Judges 2:16-23

TIMES: about 1093 B.C.; 1047 B.C.

PLACES: Shiloh; Ramah; Mizpeh;
between Mizpeh and Shen

GOLDEN TEXT—"The Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth" (I Samuel 3:10).

Lesson Exposition

The first lesson in this unit on servants is about a man of God who served in a very important phase of transition for God's people. Samuel was a man who rose to prominence as a spiritual leader because he was truly attuned to God.

Israel had been led for forty years by a priest named Eli (I Sam. 4:18). There had been years of turmoil and strife. There was a constant threat from the Philistines. Eli had been a priest of God, but his two sons had not followed God (2:12).

A young child was thrust into the midst of this sordid, sorry situation. Samuel was the first and cherished child of a woman named Hannah (1:20). She had dedicated Samuel to the Lord soon after his birth (vss. 27-28). He was taken to the sanctuary of the Lord at Shiloh to be raised and trained to serve the Lord by Eli.

SAMUEL AS A CHILD—

I Sam. 3:1-9

God's silence (I Sam. 3:1). The people of God were in a desperate situation. It was not that their enemies encompassed them. The problem was that God had stopped communicating

with them. The word "precious" in this verse should be understood to mean rare or unusual. The people were not getting messages from God. Was God's silence a manifestation of His disappointment with them? We do not know. We do know that "there was no open vision."

God's call (I Sam. 3:2-8). The sad silence of God was about to come to an end. He would speak not to the priest but to a small boy. It is sad to note that Eli was old and blind. He was still serving God, but his physical ability was severely limited.

Samuel was in the temple, near the ark of the covenant. The "lamp of God" (Judg. 3:3) had not yet gone out. (The term translated "ere" means not yet.) That reference to the golden lampstand in the sanctuary (Ex. 25:31-40) probably is given to relate God's illumination to His people. It suggests that in a short time that illumination would go out (cf. Judg. 4:10-11).

Sometime that night, God spoke in an audible voice and called to Samuel (I Sam. 3:4). Samuel did what anyone would do. He answered and said, "Here am I." It is clear that Samu-