

## THE INTERPRETATION BIBLE STUDIES LEADER HELPS

### FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

The IBS Leader Helps are designed to facilitate group study by providing lesson plans for the ten units in each of the Interpretation Bible Studies. These lesson plans utilize a variety of interactive methods, which have been chosen for the express purpose of engaging participants in the learning process.

Each participant in the group should have a copy of IBS study book and should make a commitment to do advance preparation for each session.

The sessions are planned for one hour. If the time allotted is shorter than an hour, it will be necessary to be selective about the activities, choosing those that are most appropriate for your group.

#### **Leader Preparation**

*Read First and Second Samuel* in their entirety before beginning to teach. It is important to familiarize yourself with the books' overall content, so you can see how the individual passages fit into the larger scope of the biblical books.

*Skim through the whole study book* to discern its flow. This is especially helpful if there are multiple teachers, in order to prevent leaping ahead into the next unit.

*Prepare the room ahead of time.* For informal discussion and ease of sharing, a semi-circular arrangement of chairs works best. Position yourself as one of the group, instead of setting yourself apart as "the authority."

*Secure necessary teaching aids.* A newsprint easel is an invaluable asset. Be sure to have markers and masking tape if you wish to display the sheets for future reference. A map of Palestine in the Old Testament is very helpful. Check the teaching suggestions for other necessary materials, such as hymnals, paper, pencils, art materials, and so on.

*Prepare necessary handouts.* A folder for each participant's handouts is helpful, but not essential.

*Keep the key idea firmly in mind.* Make sure all activities point participants towards this goal.

*Pray for God's guidance.* Prior to making preparations for the session, allow time to pray for each participant and for yourself.

## Unit 1: Hannah's Song (1 Samuel 2:1–10)

**Key Idea:** In a time of “troubled waiting” Hannah’s song was, and is today, an affirmation of faith and a declaration of hope.

### Advance Preparation

Locate newsprint, a stand, and markers. On one sheet of newsprint, print and post the following statement from the last paragraph on p. 3 of the study book:

In the end, the theological theme that marks our way through First and Second Samuel concerns the persistent drive . . . to balance the gift of life from God and the promise of God’s steadfast love with the ever-present temptation to take control, to usurp God’s authority.

You will also need hymnals for participants to use in the closing activity.

### Opening (10 minutes)

#### 1. Prayer

Pray aloud this prayer, or use one of your own:

Holy God,  
 We know there is no Rock like you.  
 We know you are a God of knowledge, and we give thanks for your Word  
 and for this opportunity to come to know you better.  
 May this time together be the beginning of a conversational relationship with one other,  
 our church’s traditions, and the reality we know from daily life. Amen.

#### 2. Hopes for the Study

Invite each participant to introduce him or herself to the group and tell one learning or insight they hope to get from the next ten weeks together. Jot down the comments on newsprint and set aside until the end of the study.

### Presentation (15 minutes)

#### 3. Introduction to First and Second Samuel

Introduce the material from pp. 1–5 in the study book by reading the second paragraph on page 1 aloud to the participants (beginning with, “However you make the journey . . .”). Point out that you used some of these words in the opening prayer.

Ask someone to read aloud the statement of the theological theme written on the newsprint. Tell participants that the standard of judgment used throughout the biblical narrative is the Torah, or instruction of the Mosaic covenant as found in the first five books of the Bible.

Ask participants to find the sidebar on p. 3 of the study book. Using the material from the text, quickly review the aspects of Deuteronomic history. Ask: How does this history differ from the approach of modern historians?

### **Exploration (20 minutes)**

#### *4. Background for the Bible Study*

Ask participants to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 2, then hold that place and find 2 Samuel 22. Point out that this study begins and ends with songs of thanksgiving and praise.

To set the context for Hannah's song, have participants read silently the first chapter of 1 Samuel. Then ask someone to briefly summarize the story leading up to Hannah's song in the second chapter.

#### *5. Discussion*

Discuss questions 1 and 2 on p. 15 of the study book. (Note: Be sensitive in the course of this discussion to members of your group who may be childless and not by choice.) Depending on the discussion, add the following questions: If God is not responsible for our barrenness, then how do we account for it? What does our accounting say about our view of God's sovereignty and power within human lives and life on earth, more generally? (See p. 10.)

#### *6. Listening to Scripture*

Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 2 aloud. Ask the following:

- What did you hear about barrenness in this song?
- Would you have expected to hear more reference to being barren in Hannah's song?
- Who is the king referred to in v. 10?

Have participants turn in their Bibles to Luke 1:46–56, and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss the parallels between Hannah's song and Mary's song. Tell participants that most biblical scholars believe that Hannah's song was a public psalm of praise and that Luke consciously borrowed from it in composing the Magnificat (Mary's song).

### **Response (10 minutes)**

#### *7. Open-ended Sentence*

Ask participants to respond to the following open-ended sentence: "Hannah is a model of persistent faith because . . ." Ask for volunteers to share their responses aloud.

**Closing (5 minutes)***8. Singing a Hymn*

Sing “Song of Mary” or another version of the Magnificat as a closing prayer.

*9. Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 2. Also assign the following scriptures to individual participants to read and summarize:

- 1 Samuel 2:11–17
- 1 Samuel 2:18–21
- 1 Samuel 2:22–36
- 1 Samuel 3:1—4: 1
- 1 Samuel 4:2–11
- 1 Samuel 4:12–22
- 1 Samuel 5
- 1 Samuel 6:1–18
- 1 Samuel 6:19—7:2
- 1 Samuel 7:3–17

If you have fewer than ten participants, combine the assigned scriptures.

## Unit 2: “Give Us a King” (1 Samuel 8:4–22)

**Key Idea:** The story of God granting a king to Israel is an opportunity for us to consider our life in the public sphere in the light of our covenant relationship to God and our response of Christian discipleship.

### Advance Preparation

Make copies of the following script, “Give Us a King!,” for step 4.

#### “Give Us a King!”

Narrator: All the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah.

People: You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us then, a king to govern us, like other nations.

Narrator: But the thing displeased Samuel. He prayed to the Lord.

YHWH: Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you. But they have rejected me from being king over them. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.

Narrator: So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king.

Samuel: These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.

People: No! But we are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.

Narrator: When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord.

YHWH: Listen to their voice and set a king over them.

Samuel: Each of you return home.

On newsprint, print the headings from 1 Samuel 2:11—7: 17 found in the New Revised Standard Version or another Bible version with section headings.

Print the responsive reading in step 1, as well as the group's response for the litany in step 6, on newsprint and post where it can be easily read.

Gather together some newspaper sections and news magazines with articles that deal with national issues or concerns. If it is election time, these might deal with election issues and candidates. You will also need a sheet of poster board or newsprint, several pairs of scissors, and some glue or glue sticks.

### **Opening (5 minutes)**

#### *1. Responsive Reading*

Post the newsprint you have prepared, and use this responsive reading based on Psalm 47:1–2, 6–7 to begin the session:

Clap your hands all you peoples;  
**Shout to God with loud songs of joy.**  
 For the Lord, the Most High is awesome;  
**A great king over all the earth.**  
 Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
**Sing praises to our King, sing praises,**  
 For God is king over all the earth;  
**Sing praises with a psalm.**

#### *2. Prayer*

Pray this prayer designed for a time of election:

Under your law we live, great God,  
 and by your will we govern ourselves.  
 Help us as good citizens  
 to respect neighbors whose views differ from ours,  
 so that without partisan anger,  
 we may work out issues that divide us,  
 and elect candidates to serve the common welfare;  
 through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

(From *Book of Common Worship*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 817.)

### **Presentation (20 minutes)**

#### *3. “Previously on 1 and 2 Samuel”*

Tell participants that these two books of history rival any TV miniseries for action and excitement. Before airing a new segment, some miniseries have a brief synopsis of what has happened in previous segments. Ask participants to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 2. Ask those who were assigned scriptures at the end of the last session to briefly summarize what happened in their reading. Note with participants the biblical section headings on newsprint.

#### *4. “Give Us a King!”*

Distribute copies of the script and assign the parts of narrator, God (YHWH), Samuel, and the people. Give participants a moment to read over the script, then have them read it aloud.

### **Exploration (15 minutes)**

#### *5. Discussing a Contradiction*

Have the participants consider the question from the member of the author’s adult Sunday school class, located in the study book at the bottom of p. 19. Ask someone to find and read aloud Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Discuss the two ways the study book says we might relate this passage to 1 Samuel 8:4–22 (see p. 20).

#### *6. Good Citizen, Good Disciple*

Discuss question 4 on p. 25. How does the information in the study book about the stance of the Reformed tradition on making and reforming the body politic inform our approach?

### **Response (15 minutes)**

#### *7. Reflecting on Our News*

Distribute to the participants the newspapers and news magazines you collected, along with scissors. Ask them to peruse the printed materials in silence, cutting out articles or headlines that reflect issues or events where we might be called on to act as good disciples as well as good citizens. Have them glue the articles to the poster board.

When everyone is finished, read aloud the headlines or story titles, pausing to reflect silently on each one.

## Closing (5 minutes)

### 8. *Litany for the Nation*

Pray this litany to close the session:

Leader: O God, your justice is like rock, and your mercy like pure flowing water. Judge and forgive us. If we have turned from you, return us to your way; for without you we are lost people.

People: Deliver us, O God.

Leader: From public deceptions that weaken trust; from self-seeking in high political places;

People: Deliver us, O God.

Leader: From divisions among us of class or race; from wealth that will not share, and poverty that feeds on food of bitterness;

People: Deliver us, O God.

Leader: From neglecting rights; from overlooking the hurt, the imprisoned, and the needy among us;

People: Deliver us, O God.

Leader: From a lack of concern for other lands and peoples; from narrowness of national purpose; from failure to welcome the peace you promised on earth;

People: Deliver us, O God.

(Adapted from *The Worshipbook*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972, p. 128.)

### 9. *Assignment*

Have participants read Unit 3 and Samuel's farewell sermon in 1 Samuel 12:1–25. Ask for a volunteer who will be prepared to read the scripture as a sermon at the next session. In addition, ask half the participants to read 1 Samuel 9:1–10, 16. Ask the other half to read Samuel 10:17–27.



### Unit 3: Samuel's Farewell Sermon (1 Samuel 12:1–25)

**Key Idea:** A key for discerning God's will can be found in the delivering and forming story of the covenant community.

#### Advance Preparation

Check with the person who volunteered to present the sermon for the group to be sure he or she is prepared. You will also need hymnals.

#### Opening (5 minutes)

##### 1. *Praying a Hymn*

Tell participants that you will sing “Spirit of the Living God” (or another hymn about the presence of the Spirit) as an opening prayer.

#### Presentation (20 minutes)

##### 2. *Two Accounts of the Choosing of the King*

Ask those who read 1 Samuel 9:1–10, 16 in preparation for this session to briefly summarize the scripture. Do the same for those who read Samuel 10:17–27. Then ask the following: How does the author of the study book explain these different accounts for the same event?

##### 3. *Spirit-filled Judgeship*

Ask: What was a “judge” in early biblical times? (See the sidebar on p. 27 of the study book.)

Then note that in the story of Saul's victory over King Nahash and the Ammonites, the author tells us that Saul acts very much like a judge. Ask: What is the significance of the way the Deuteronomic historian portrays this victory?

#### Exploration (25 minutes)

##### 4. *Hearing a Sermon*

The author of the study book tells us that sermons offered the Deuteronomic historian with a way to sum up and interpret events. Ask the volunteer who accepted the assignment at the end of the last session to read 1 Samuel 12:1–25, Samuel's farewell address.

### 5. *Group Discussion*

Discuss the sermon, and ask some of the following questions:

- Why was it important for the congregation to affirm Samuel's righteousness?
- How does the Bible define *righteousness*, according to the author?
- What, according to the author, is the definition of good leadership? Do you agree or disagree?
- What happens, according to the author, when the covenant promise is broken? How is forgiveness related to punishment?

### 6. *Discernment and Discerning*

Discuss Steven Carter's steps necessary for an "integral life," found on p. 34 of the study book. What step does the author suggest must come prior to Carter's first step?

### **Response (5 minutes)**

### 7. *Affirming Our Faith*

Following a sermon in the service of worship we normally affirm our faith. Have the participants affirm their faith by saying together the Apostle's Creed.

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

### 8. *Praying a Hymn*

Sing again the hymn from step 1, this time as a closing prayer.

### 9. *Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 4 and 1 Samuel 15:1–35. Ask them also to reflect on the four questions on p. 43 of the study book.

## Unit 4: Royal Sin and Disastrous Consequences (1 Samuel 15:1–35)

**Key Idea: It is sometimes very difficult to see the good of God’s will and be obedient to it, but faith affirms that God wills what is good for human beings.**

### Advance Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the procedure for examination of consciousness in step 7, and provide hymnals for the group.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. Prayer

Pray this prayer, or one of your own:

O Lord our God, we know your great delight is in the obedience of your people. Forgive our rebellious, stubborn ways. Grant that we may be open to hearing and heeding your voice. For we ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

#### 2. Singing a Hymn

Sing “Open My Eyes that I May See” or another hymn asking for God’s illumination and guidance.

### Presentation (20 minutes)

#### 3. Reading Scripture

To set the stage, read aloud Deuteronomy 25:17–19. Also refer the participants to the sidebar on p. 37 for information about the Amalekites. Then ask for volunteers to read 1 Samuel 15:1–35 aloud in “round robin” fashion, as outlined below. If you have fewer than six participants, assign longer portions of the reading to each participant.

- Reader 1: vs. 1–4
- Reader 2: vs. 4–9
- Reader 3: vs. 10–16
- Reader 4: vs. 17–23
- Reader 5: vs. 24–31
- Reader 6: vs. 32–35

Take a straw vote of participants to see whether sympathies lie with Saul or with Samuel and YHWH.

#### *4. Group Discussion*

Discuss the two fundamental principles of Reformed approaches to the Bible the author cites on p. 38. Ask: What are the three questions faced by ancient readers to which the narrative seems to respond? (See p. 39 of the study book.)

#### **Exploration (20 minutes)**

##### *5. Small Group Work*

Divide into three small groups and give each group one of these “testing stories” to read:

- Genesis 22
- Exodus 32
- Matthew 26:36–46

After about five minutes, discuss how each story involves the testing of wills. In which were the human players obedient?

##### *6. Where Are We in the Story?*

Invite participants to share any insights they may have from reflecting on the assignment from the end of the last session (to reflect on the questions on p. 43). Then discuss this question from pp. 44–45 of the study book:

How can those who are called to “listen and obey” the Word of God work and participate in public life, a marketplace of ideas and alternative values, without being compelled to compromise their religious ideals?

#### **Response (10 minutes)**

##### *7. Examination of Consciousness*

Discerning God’s will requires spending time in prayer. Invite participants to join in this exercise of discerning the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit through a review of their daily activities.

- Ask the participants to sit quietly, breathing in God’s presence and breathing out the distractions of the world.
- Then invite them to identify and list in their minds the major events of their day, including particular conversations and encounters, meals, and other activities. Ask that they reflect on these events.
- Invite them to become aware of moments in the day when they felt blessed, and give thanks to God for those moments.

- Then invite them to acknowledge for themselves moments when their actions were less than that which Christ would have them do, and ask for forgiveness.
- Ask that they reflect on the meaning of the day. What is God saying to them through the events of the day? What is God's will?
- Finally, ask them to give thanks for the gift of the day.

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

#### *8. Praying a Hymn*

Select one verse from the hymn you used in step 2 to read as a closing prayer. Read the words slowly and with meaning. Sit in silence for a few moments, then say, "And the people say, Amen."

#### *9. Assignment*

Assign participants to read Unit 5 and 1 Samuel 16:1–13. Ask them also to answer question 4 at the end of the unit.

## Unit 5: “Arise, Anoint Him; for This Is He” (1 Samuel 16:1–13)

**Key Idea: What God searches for in the hearts of those with whom God covenants is a commitment to wholehearted love—heart, mind, soul, and spirit.**

### Advance Preparation

You will need newsprint, markers, and tape.

Locate a small, attractive bowl and some scented oil for the closing activity. Also copy the words from the baptismal service to be used for the anointing onto newsprint and display them where they can be easily read.

Make journaling prompts. On index cards, print one of the following: Samuel, Jesse, elders, Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah. If your group has more than six participants, check the sidebar on p. 49 of the study book for the names of Jesse’s other sons. For a very large group, make duplicate cards. Participants will also need paper and pens or pencils to write responses.

If possible, find a map of ancient Palestine in the time of David.

From red construction paper, cut enough heart shapes for each participant to have one.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. *Opening Scripture and Prayer*

Read aloud Jeremiah 31:31–34. Then pray the following prayer, or one of your own:

Lord God, we come together confident that we will hear your voice. We pray that we do not harden our hearts to your will for our lives. Rather, open our hearts and make us receptive to your promises. Amen.

### Presentation (15 minutes)

#### 2. *Map Study*

On the map locate Ramah and Gibeah in the north. Then find Bethlehem in the south. Briefly summarize the information in the study book on pp. 48–49 about the symbolic significance of the shift from north to south.

#### 3. *Scripture and Journaling*

Pass out the journaling prompts you prepared. Ask participants to listen as you read 1 Samuel 16:1–13 and imagine the story from the perspective of the character on their card. Then allow about five minutes for them to write a response from the perspective of that character. Volunteers can share their written responses with the group.

### Exploration (20 minutes)

#### 4. Hebrew Understanding of “Heart”

Print the word “Heart” in the center of a sheet of newsprint. Ask participants to call out phrases that would explain the Hebrew understanding of *heart*. Jot the phrases down around the word. Discuss question 3 at the end of the unit.

#### 5. Holy Spirit

On another sheet of newsprint, print the word “Spirit.” Ask participants to discuss likenesses and differences they noticed in the two passages when they did their assignment from the previous session.

### Response (10 minutes)

#### 6. Heart-seeing

Distribute the construction paper hearts and pens or pencils. Ask participants to reflect on their own lives and think about one or two particular things that consume their energy and time. Print these on one side of the heart. Then ask that they reflect on what they think matters in their lives from God’s perspective, that is, the heart-seeing perspective, and print that on the other side. Take a few minutes for sharing between participants. How might our lives be different if we could look at life with God’s discerning love?

### Closing (10 minutes)

#### 7. Anointing

Remind the participants that the anointing that signals our belonging to God takes place in baptism, when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pass the bowl of scented oil from person to person, with each person making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person next to him or her and repeating the following from the service of baptism:

O Lord, uphold (*name of person*) by your Holy Spirit.  
 Daily increase in (*him/her*) your gifts of grace:  
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
 the spirit of counsel and might,  
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,  
 the spirit of joy in your presence,  
 both now and forever. Amen.

(From *Book of Common Worship*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 470.)

### 8. *Prayer*

Pray the following:

Defend O Lord, these your servants  
with your heavenly grace,  
that they may continue yours forever,  
and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more,  
until they come to your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

(From *Book of Common Worship*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 471.)

### 9. *Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 6 and 2 Samuel 7:1–17. Ask them also to spend time reflecting on question 2 at the end of the unit.



## Unit 6: A Promise of Steadfast Love Forever (2 Samuel 7:1–17)

**Key Idea:** With God’s promise to David to establish a “house” to follow after him, we are assured of the steadfast love and grace of God in Christ.

### Advance Preparation

On a sheet of newsprint, print the following:

#### Israel’s Past

1. The Exodus and the Conquest (Deuteronomy and Joshua)
2. The Time of Judges (Judges and 1 Samuel)
3. The Period of the Monarchy (2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings)

On another sheet of newsprint, draw a simple outline of a house. It should be large enough to take up most of the page.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. Unison Reading

Read Psalm 89:1–4 in unison:

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;  
 With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.  
 I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;  
 Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.  
 You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
 I have sworn to my servant David:  
 I will establish your descendants forever,  
 and build your throne for all generations.”

#### 2. Prayer

Use this prayer, or one of your own:

We praise your wonders, O Lord God of hosts. We give thanks for your steadfast love, extended to David and to us through the covenant promises. Grant that we may witness to your unconditional love, experienced in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **Presentation (20 minutes)**

### *3. History Lesson*

Using the newsprint you prepared, quickly review the Deuteronomic historian's structuring of history. Refer to the material on pp. 56–57 of the study book.

### *4. Importance of the Text*

Discuss the following statements by Walter Brueggemann, as quoted in the study book:

- “[This passage] occupies the dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus. Indeed, this is one of the most crucial texts in the Old Testament for evangelical faith” (p. 56).
- “It goes without saying that this text does not intend to point to Jesus” (p. 58).

Ask: What caution does the author add to Brueggemann's first statement?

### *5. Reading Scripture*

Read aloud 2 Samuel 7:1–3. Then ask one participant to read the remainder of the passage, the oracle of Nathan.

## **Exploration (20 minutes)**

### *6. A Play on Words*

Print the word “House” on the outline of the house. Ask participants to call out various meanings of the word mentioned in the text. Then ask: What did David mean when he spoke of building a house for the ark? What did God intend instead? Then discuss question 2 at the end of the unit.

## **Response (10 minutes)**

### *7. Costly Grace vs. Cheap Grace*

Ask participants to pair up. Have one person in each pair read the sidebar on p. 64 of the study book, and the other read question 4 on p. 65. Then have them discuss the information and question with one another.

## **Closing (5 minutes)**

### *8. Singing a Hymn*

Sing together “Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound.”

### 9. Prayer

Ask participants to reflect silently on examples of God's amazing grace in their own lives. Close by saying: "For your amazing grace, O God, we give thanks. Amen."

### 10. Assignment

Ask participants to read Unit 7 and 2 Samuel 11:1–27. Suggest that those who have access to the Internet check [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org) and use the search engine there to find and view two artists' renderings of Bathsheba: *The Toilet of Bathsheba* by Rembrandt and *Bathsheba at Her Bath* by Guiseppe Bartholomeo Chiara. They can be found under European Painting.

## Unit 7: David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1–27)

**Key Idea:** The story of David’s moral failure points us toward a look at our own feelings, impulses, and patterns of living.

### Advance Preparation

If possible, download and print out the two paintings suggested as a part of the assignment from the previous session. Print the questions on p. 70 of the study book on newsprint and post them where they can be easily read.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. Prayer

Pray together the Lord’s Prayer.

### Presentation (25 minutes)

#### 2. Listening to Scripture

Post the newsprint with the questions from p. 70 of the study book. Ask participants to listen to the reading of the scripture with these questions in mind. Then have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 11:1–27.

#### 3. Discussing Contrasts

Ask participants to name the examples of contrasts listed by the author on pp. 70–72. Specifically, the text tells us that Bathsheba is a woman without a name until David made use of her.

If you have been able to obtain copies of the two paintings from the Internet site, pass them around. Ask participants what they notice about the paintings. Is David portrayed at all? How is Bathsheba portrayed? What do the depictions imply about her significance?

End this step by discussing the significance of the *sojourner* (see question 3 at the end of the unit).

### Exploration (20 minutes)

#### 4. Open-ended Sentences

Ask participants to respond to the following open-ended sentences:

- When I heard what David did, I . . .
- Uriah, a sojourner, was . . .
- When David sent for Bathsheba, she . . .
- Having power and position can . . .

### 5. *The Ten Words*

Ask someone to read Exodus 20:13–17 (Commandments 6–10). Although we typically think of David’s breaking the commandment against adultery, one can make a case for his having broken these other commandments, too. What does the author have to say about discipleship that has bearing on the Ten Commandments? (See the second paragraph on p. 73 of the study book.)

#### **Response (5 minutes)**

### 6. *Bringing Ourselves to God*

Read the following quotation from p. 74 of the study book:

David took what he wanted with utter disregard for that to which he was most deeply committed: namely, his relationship with God and his service to God’s people. If we are honest with ourselves, we know David intimately, do we not?

Ask that participants sit in silence, offering to God that behavior in themselves most reminiscent of David in this story.

#### **Closing (5 minutes)**

### 7. *Guided Prayer*

Lead the group in a guided prayer based on the Lord’s Prayer, which you prayed together in step 1. After each phrase, pause for a time of silent prayer.

### 8. *Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 8 and 2 Samuel 12:1–15b. Ask them also to answer questions 1 and 2 at the end of the unit. For question 2, ask them to look for newspaper articles or Internet news articles as example to bring to the next session. Also have them research the meaning of *parable* in a Bible dictionary or on the Internet.

### Unit 8: David under Judgment (2 Samuel 12:1–15b)

**Key Idea: David's sin forces us to examine the evidences of evil in God's sight in our own lives and urges us to confession, responsibility, and penitence.**

#### Advance Preparation

Make copies of the following Reader's Theater piece on 2 Samuel 12:

#### Reader's Theater: 2 Samuel 12

**Narrator:** The thing that David had done was evil in God's sight, and the Lord sent Nathan to David.

**Nathan:** There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loathe to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.

**David:** As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

**Nathan:** You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul: I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

**David:** I have sinned against the Lord.

**Nathan:** Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die.

Put the author's translation of 2 Samuel 11:27 (found on p. 77 of the study book) on newsprint and post it where it can be easily seen. The verse reads: "What David did was evil in YHWH's sight."

You will need hymnals, paper, and pens or pencils for the participants.

### **Opening (5 minutes)**

#### *1. Praying a Psalm*

Remind participants of the Hebrew understanding of the heart—that is, the heart as the mind and will (or center of self) from which action and loyalty spring. Then ask them to pray silently as you read aloud Psalm 51, said to be a psalm David wrote in repentance for his actions against Uriah and Bathsheba.

### **Presentation (15 minutes)**

#### *2. Reviewing the Story of David and Bathsheba*

Ask for a volunteer to briefly retell the story of David and Bathsheba from the last session. When the retelling is finished, invite other participants to add any details or aspects of the story that may have been omitted. Then ask participants to suggest possible explanations for David's behavior. Ask: Do explanations excuse what David did?

#### *3. Righteousness and Evil*

Call the attention of participants to the newsprint with the author's translation of 2 Samuel 11:27. Ask: How does the author of the study book define *righteousness* and *evil*? Then discuss questions 1 and 2 at the end of the unit. Have participants share articles they brought in as examples of evil.

### **Exploration (20 minutes)**

#### *4. Exploring Parables*

Discuss what the participants found out about parables. (If they did an Internet search, they may have found some interesting modern parables to share.) Otherwise, participants can name favorite parables from the New Testament or elsewhere.

#### *5. Reader's Theater*

Assign the parts of Nathan and David in the Reader's Theater. Allow the readers a minute or two to read over their parts, then have them present the scripture. Discuss question 3 at the end of the unit.

### 6. *Parables as Symbols of the Truth*

The author suggests that Nathan's parable helped open David's eyes to the evil he had done, and to the judgment he deserved. He also suggests on pp. 82–83 that sometimes television scenes of events can serve as parables for us, revealing truths we would rather not see. Ask: Have you ever seen coverage of an event that acted as a parable for you? What was it? What truth was revealed?

Note that confession and absolution for David's sin did not prevent the consequences of his behavior. The author says on p. 85, however, that we miss the point if we look at the child's death as crude justice. Ask: What does he suggest is closer to the truth? Do you agree or disagree?

#### **Response (15 minutes)**

### 7. *Writing Parables*

Give the participants paper and pencil and let them try writing their own parables about David's behavior. When they are finished, participants can share their parables in pairs.

#### **Closing (5 minutes)**

### 8. *Singing a Hymn*

Sing "Have Mercy on Us, Living Lord" or another hymn of repentance.

### 9. *Closing Prayer*

God of mercy,  
 you know us better than we know ourselves,  
 and still you love us.  
 Wash us from all our sins,  
 create in us clean hearts,  
 and strengthen us by your Holy Spirit  
 that we may give you praise;  
 through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(From *Book of Common Worship*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 671.)

### 10. *Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 10 and 2 Samuel 18:9—19:8. Ask them also to write an answer to question 2 at the end of the unit.



## Unit 9: David and Absalom at War (2 Samuel 18:9—19:8)

**Key Idea:** Like David, though we are forgiven, the consequences of our sinful acts still affect our own lives and the lives of others, often in tragic ways.

### Advance Preparation

Copy the words of the responsive reading on newsprint and post where it can be easily read. You will need drawing paper and crayons or colored markers for each participant.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. Responsive Reading

Read Psalm 25:6–7 responsively:

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD,  
and of your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.

**Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O LORD.**

#### 2. Prayer

Use the following prayer or one of your own:

Covenant Friend,  
remember not our sins,  
but recall your compassion to your children.  
We turn to you for guidance and life,  
turn also to us and be gracious,  
that we may always follow in the way  
of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

(From *Book of Common Worship*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 637.)

### Presentation (15 minutes)

#### 3. Composing Headlines

Divide the participants into two small groups. Assign one group to read 2 Sam. 13:1–22, and the other to read vs. 23–39. Have each group compose a news headline for what they have read. Ask a member of each group to summarize the story in the passage. Print a brief summary under the appropriate headline on the newsprint. Using the information in the study book on p. 91, review what happened after Absalom fled.

#### 4. *Family History*

Review what the author has to say on pp. 89–90 about Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom*. Ask for volunteers to tell of an event in their family history, either positive or negative, that has had an effect on the family history.

#### **Exploration (25 minutes)**

##### 5. *Listening to Scripture*

Recall for participants that David divided his army into three parts, each under a different commander. David himself was persuaded to stay in the city. Divide participants into three groups and assign each group one of these three readings: 2 Samuel 18:9–18; 18:19–32; 19:1–8. Give each participant paper and crayons or colored markers. Ask for three volunteers to read the three passages. Although everyone should hear the entire reading, ask each group to focus on what visual image comes to mind as they hear their assigned passage. Then have them use the drawing materials to depict that image. Emphasize that they can make a sketch or use symbols or a phrase. Participants can share and discuss their images within their particular group.

##### 6. *God’s Purpose*

Point out that the author tells us that 2 Samuel 12 is the last place where we see YHWH’s perspective on David’s life. Ask: How is God’s purpose worked out now? Why does the author, quoting Brueggemann on p. 83 of the study book, say that YHWH “is utterly partisan to David”?

##### 7. *Loving Our Enemies*

Discuss the three clues to loving our enemies the author suggests are provided by the scripture (see p. 96 of the study book). Then ask the group to discuss question 2 at the end of the unit.

#### **Response (10 minutes)**

##### 8. *Enemy Love*

On newsprint, print the word “Enemy.” Ask participants to brainstorm words that come to mind, calling them out quickly without taking time to evaluate their choice of words. Print these words around the word “Enemy.” Then on another sheet, print the word “Love” and repeat the exercise. Give participants a moment to read and reflect on both clusters of words. Then print the phrase “Enemy Love” and ask the participants to generate phrases using the first two clusters of words. Print these phrases on the sheet.

**Closing (5 minutes)***9. Prayer*

Use this prayer, or one of your own:

Gracious God, in the prayer taught to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray, “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” How well we know that sin casts a long shadow, staining lives from generation to generation. How jealously we nurse the pain of hurts inflicted by the actions of others, especially those committed against us by those we love and who we yearn to have love us. But how easily we forget that our own sinful behavior may bleed into the lives of others. Hear us now as we pray sincerely: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” (*pause for silent prayer*) For we ask in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*10. Assignment*

Ask participants to read Unit 10 and 2 Samuel 22:1–51. Ask them also to answer in writing question 4 at the end of the unit.

If you decide to use the alternate plan for the final session (singing hymns), ask participants to make a list of hymns suggested by the words and phrases in the scripture passage (see question 1 at the end of the unit).

## Unit 10: A Closing Song of Celebration (2 Samuel 22:1–51)

**Key Idea:** Like the writer of this psalm of praise, we can proclaim God’s steadfast presence and love, and we can trust our future to God’s care.

### Advance Preparation

Locate several concordances and have available hymnals available. Copy the words of the prayer in step 1 onto newsprint and post where it can be easily read.

Note: An alternative to this session plan would be to devote the entire session to singing hymns of redemption and salvation, located by checking the subject index of the hymnal.

### Opening (5 minutes)

#### 1. Prayer

Open with this prayer, adapted from David’s Song of Thanksgiving in 2 Samuel 22:2–3, 50:

Gracious and Almighty God,  
 you are our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer—  
 our God, our rock, in whom we take refuge.  
 You are our shield and the horn of our salvation,  
 our stronghold and our refuge.  
 Our savior, you save us from violence.  
 For this we extol you, O Lord, among the nations  
 and sing praises to your name. Amen.

### Presentation and Exploration (35 minutes)

#### 2. Metaphors for God

Ask participants to read over 2 Samuel 22:2–4 and list the names for God included in these verses. Then have them use a concordance to find these same images elsewhere in the First Testament.

#### 3. A Metaphor for Threats

Ask participants to read vs. 5–7. Discuss this metaphor for threats to God’s intention for good life for us, using the author’s questions at the top of p. 103. Then ask participants to share their responses to question 4 on p. 107 (the assignment from the previous session).

#### 4. Metaphors for God’s Saving Response

As participants sit with eyes closed, read aloud 2 Samuel 22:8–20. Ask: What images came to your mind’s eye? How would you describe your own experience of salvation? Would you use cosmic language like this, or would you describe it in other terms?

**Response (15 minutes)***5. David's Song: Our Song?*

Have participants respond to question 3 at the end of the unit.

*6. God's Love for God's People*

Ask participants to share what they have learned in the past ten units about God's love for God's people.

*7. Reviewing Expectations*

Display the newsprint from session 1 on which you listed participants' expectations for the study. Ask participants to respond to these prompts:

- My expectations were met because . . .
- I wish we had . . .
- I am challenged to learn more about . . .

**Closing (5 minutes)***8. Singing a Hymn*

Sing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" or another hymn about God's strength and protection.

*9. Closing Words of Scripture*

Close by reading the words of the Magnificat on p. 106 of the study book. Ask participants to respond by saying "Amen."