ENDURING FAITH™

Sunday School • Midweek Bible Curriculum

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

Unit 1: God Creates a World and a Kingdom

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood**, **Elementary**, and **Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God's people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God's Word**—that we don't just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You'll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory **"Launch"** section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following **"Learn & Live"** section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The **"Leave"** section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don't neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don't force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

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ENDURING FAITH™
Sunday School • Midweek
Bible Curriculum

ADULT
Unit 1
STUDY GUIDE
Lesson 12

A PROPHET SERVES

Samuel
1 Samuel 3
1060–1049 BC

BIBLE TRUTH
God calls us to serve Him.

LEARNER GOAL
I can list different ways God has called me, His redeemed child, to serve my neighbor in my household and in the church.

BIBLE VERSE
Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears. 1 Samuel 3:9

LAW & GOSPEL
God calls us to follow Him and do His will, but we turn deaf ears to Him and refuse to listen. **God opens our ears to His saving Word in Jesus and empowers us to follow Him and serve others.**

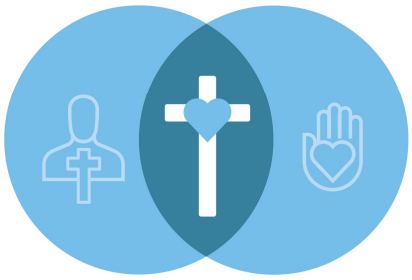
SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT
Having been raised in the tabernacle from the time he was a young child, Samuel continues to serve Eli the priest. One night, Samuel runs to Eli, thinking Eli is calling his name. Eli sends Samuel back to bed, assuring him he had not called. As the pattern repeats, Eli tells Samuel to lie down once again but then next time respond, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" (v. 9). When the Lord calls once again, He gives Samuel a vision of how Samuel will succeed Eli, rather than Eli's "worthless" sons.

LEARNER PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible* (*TLSB*).

MORE TIME Read through the sections on Eli and Samuel in the *Lutheran Bible Companion*, volume 1, pages 276–78.

IN DEPTH Read over 1 Samuel 1–2.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?
God has called me to be His own through Christ.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?
As God's child, I am here to listen to and obey God's voice.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.

ADULT
I can list different ways God has called me, His redeemed child, to serve my neighbor in my household and in the church.

YOUTH
I can serve my God who called me to faith and empowers me to serve Him and others.

ELEMENTARY
I understand that God calls me to serve Him.

EARLY CHILDHOOD
I know God wants me to be a helper.

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LEADER NOTE

For the opening question, if people get stuck, give them suggestions like parent, husband or wife, employee, church member, neighbor, or citizen. Remind them that this is just to get them thinking about their roles, leading them into how God calls us to serve

BONUS ACTIVITY

Check out *TLSB*, page 139, for a map of the tabernacle interior, where Samuel was lying down when God called to him.

BONUS ACTIVITY

The Fourth Commandment and the Table of Duties both show us God's plan for how we are to serve our neighbor. In a large group or in small groups, make connections between the different people in the narrative of Samuel and God's plan for us as His human creatures (e.g., Hannah, Samuel, and Eli all serving as either positive or negative examples of how these duties are demonstrated).

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests; pray for those requests either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Learner Goal, and Bible Verse. Then, begin with the opening reflection question on the lesson handout.

OPENING REFLECTION

Make a list of the top five responsibilities you have been given in life; then, rank the list. Why did you rank them that way?

LEARN & LIVE

1 SAMUEL 3:1–3

BIBLE COMMENTARY

The era of the judges is coming to a close. Eli and his sons have failed to fulfill their priestly duties, so God calls a young child of promise, Samuel, to assume leadership. In those days, God's Word is rare; prophetic visions and revelations are few and far between. God's people have also drifted far from where God wants them to be: clinging to His Word and promise. Yet despite their failures and sin, God is still faithful. He uses Samuel to speak His Word again to His people. It is fitting that God calls the boy as he sleeps in the tabernacle. God is still near His people, calling them to faith.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Imagine your life without God's Word. What would it be like? What does God's Word do for you? How does it change everything in your life?

REFLECTION HELPS

Without God's Word, we cannot have faith, forgiveness, or life. We receive these gifts through the Means of Grace, the vehicles through which Jesus delivers salvation to us. It changes our perspectives on who we are, who God is, and what God does for us.

1 SAMUEL 3:4–9

BIBLE COMMENTARY

As he served in the tabernacle, Samuel would have been used to performing custodial tasks at different times of the day. He also displays a stellar ability to listen. Though he does not yet know the Lord, he listens to Him, assuming it is Eli. Though Eli is far from where God wants a high priest to be, he eventually acknowledges (after some annoyance) that it must be the Lord speaking to his young ward. In both Eli and Samuel, we see God's people acknowledging their roles in their service to the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Put yourself in Samuel's place. Based on the text, what do you think his feelings were? Do the same exercise for Eli. What does this tell us about who and how God can call into His service?

REFLECTION HELPS

Both Samuel and Eli would have been confused about what was going on. Samuel, however, displayed nothing but commitment to his authorities, while Eli displayed a lack of patience at first. Eventually, Eli understood what was going on. God calls people from all walks of life to serve Him. We need only to listen to His Word, which includes the Law and the Gospel: our need for a Savior and God's faithfulness to give us one.

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1 SAMUEL 3:10–14

BIBLE COMMENTARY

We often stop telling the narrative to children at this point. It's difficult to make the message of a young child like Samuel bringing news of God's wrath and judgment against His high priest into a "fun" story. Yet it's true. Because of Eli's lack of restraint with his sons, God brings judgment on Eli's house. They will be cut off because of their blasphemy. This serves as a stark reminder for us. God's Law is severe. God has a plan for how we should live as His human creatures, and we fail to live up to it. Thanks be to God that we have the Great High Priest, Jesus Himself, who atones for our sins. We can always return to Him in our trespasses and receive His good gifts.

REFLECTION QUESTION

When can serving God also mean bringing unpopular or unpleasant news? What should we remember so that we do not get discouraged when God's Word prompts us to bring this sort of news to others?

REFLECTION HELPS

Our sinful flesh naturally wars against God's will for us. Many in our culture, and especially those who belong to different religious groups, reject God's will. Speaking the unpopular truth of how God wants all to love Him and one another can cause alienation or disruptions between Christians and the world. Yet, as we speak the truth in love, we remember God's Word is truth and we look for opportunities to share the Gospel hope with those who are broken.

1 SAMUEL 3:15–21

BIBLE COMMENTARY

The scene that follows would work well in a play. As morning comes, Samuel is reluctant to share the hard news with Eli. Eventually, the fearful Samuel opens the doors. Eli, distraught from anticipation, demands that Samuel share God's Word. In a moment of passion, he even threatens the boy if he fails to tell him God's message. As Samuel recounts judgment, Eli speaks what is either a resolute or sarcastic response. The scene then fast-forwards through Samuel's early life before ending. The same God who spoke judgment through Samuel now speaks freely to His people through the young man. God's Word is at work!

REFLECTION QUESTION

It's unclear whether Eli's response was a resolve to God's will or sarcasm. What does this show us about what we should expect from others as we serve the Lord?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers may include responses they have received while trying to share their faith with others. Encourage them to share these reflections with one another. Make sure to point to the fact that though it's our task to share God's Word with the lost and broken world, we must do so trusting that God will work what He wills.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

In Christ, God has called you to be His. Consider one way that you and your household can serve together in your congregation this year.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ, the only true obedient Son of the Father, listened to Him and chose to give His life on the cross for the sake of God's people. He is the ultimate example of how we are to submit to God the Father and learn to serve our neighbor.

LEADER NOTE

Brainstorm with your learners the different service opportunities your congregation offers. Then, consider challenging each household unit to make a commitment to serve in one new capacity in the upcoming months, sharing how it would help each learner better understand the role of congregational service in the Christian life.

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A PROPHET SERVES

ADULT
Unit 1
LESSON HANDOUT
Lesson 12

BIBLE TRUTH
God calls us to serve Him.

LEARNER GOAL
I can list different ways God has called me, His redeemed child, to serve my neighbor in my household and in the church.

BIBLE VERSE
Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears. 1 Samuel 3:9

Samuel
1 Samuel 3

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION Make a list of the top five responsibilities you have been given in life; then, rank the list. Why did you rank them that way?

1 SAMUEL 3:1–3 Imagine your life without God's Word. What would it be like? What does God's Word do for you? How does it change everything in your life?

1 SAMUEL 3:4–9 Put yourself in Samuel's place. Based on the text, what do you think his feelings were? Do the same exercise for Eli. What does this tell us about who and how God can call into His service?

1 SAMUEL 3:10–14 When can serving God also mean bringing unpopular or unpleasant news? What should we remember so that we do not get discouraged when God's Word prompts us to bring this sort of news to others?

1 SAMUEL 3:15–21 It's unclear whether Eli's response was a resolve to God's will or sarcasm. What does this show us about what we should expect from others as we serve the Lord?

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NOTES

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