LISTENING TO SAMUEL

Who's Writing? The author of 1-2 Samuel is anonymous and unknown like many of the OT narratives. The books were originally one work that was divided into 2 parts; likely because the entire book could not fit on one scroll. Since Samuel's death is recorded in 1 Sam 25, he could not have written the book but may have written material used as a source for the author. "Samuel" is probably not the best title since the book's central focus is on how David was the flawed but model leader of God's people.

Who's listening? The book was written to Israel sometime during the troubles of the divided kingdom or during the exile of both Judah and Israel. Either way, the original audience had grown cynical & had a deep mistrust in their national & spiritual leadership ("they are the reason why we are divided/in exile!"). They were wondering if God's promises and plan were a false hope. They were in need of new hope that God was at work and would be faithful despite the appearance to the contrary. They wondered if they should trust in cultural models of leadership (based on wealth, power and pride) to get the nation back on track or if God's leaders operated in a different way.

How to Listen to... OT Narrative

- Enter into the 'scene' of each story paying attention to detail, repeated words, imagery, how characters are portrayed and what the dialogue reveals.
- Remember the overall story each book is telling. (Every story is within a story)
- Each book of the bible is meant to be read in the larger context of God's Story as a whole.
- The stories of the OT usually teach truth *indirectly* by showing us God acting in real history.
- The stories of the OT are real. They are not fiction and they are not G rated. The realism of the stories show us how God works in our human brokenness and messiness.
- The things people do are not necessarily good examples. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
- Some stories are meant to provoke questions & raise tensions that are addressed more directly in other parts of the bible.

Where Samuel fits in the Big Story

Kingdom & Covenant. God's covenant promise is to reconcile a *people,* restore them to the joy of His *presence* in a renewed *place* of blessing*.* Samuel tells the story of an important transition and development in the Covenant Story. At the beginning of Samuel the people are divided, the tabernacle/ark are destroyed/stolen and the land is under the control of enemies (mainly Philistines). At the end of Samuel - through David's leadership - the people are unified, a temple is about to be built and the land is at rest from war. *God is faithful to his covenant.*

David & the Son of David. Early in Genesis we see that God's purpose was to undo the curse and restore his kingdom blessings through a seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Later in Genesis, we find that the blessings will come through the seed/son of Abraham. Exodus reveals that the nation that came from Abraham needs a mediator in the covenant. In Samuel, God makes a covenant to restore his kingdom/rule through one of David's descendents. As we read the rest of the story, we are meant to be look for this king. *We aren't the hero of our stories.*

A Way Out of the Downward Spiral. 1-2 Samuel pick up the story where Judges leaves off. Judges tells the story of Israel's continual downward spiral into idolatry and God's compassion and faithfulness to deliver them out of the suffering brought on by their idolatry. The end of Judges leaves us at the bottom of a downward spiral of idolatry and evil. The book of Ruth introduces a ray of hope that redemption can come on the other side of suffering through a hero provided by God's *hesed* (covenant love - Ruth 2:20). If the leadership of Moses, Joshua and the judges cannot cure Israel's waywardness, who can? Saul's life mirrors the downward spiral of Israel in Judges; David's kingship shows the way out. *No matter how far down we go, God can always raise us up.*

Big Theme: David delivered God's people from their enemies through a path of great suffering that led to greater glory & joy for Him and the people of Israel. David's greater & faithful son will bring a greater deliverance by following the same path. True strength for living and leading is a gift of grace that comes to the humble.

Outline

Israel's True Leader

Part One - Samuel's Leadership (God is Israel's True Leader)
- A. Leadership from Eli to Samuel (1 Sam 1-7)
  - i. *Hannah's Song - Book Intro*
- B. Leadership from Samuel to Saul (1 Sam 8-12)

Part Two - Saul's Leadership (Saul - Israel's Failed Leader)
- A. Saul's Leadership Failure (1 Sam 13-15)
- B. Saul and David's Leadership Struggle (1 Sam 16-31)

Part Three - David's Leadership (God uses Leaders Like David)
- A. David's Leadership Model (2 Sam 1-8)
- B. David's Leadership Failures & Lessons (2 Sam 9-20)
- *Appendix* (2 Sam 21-24) Despite His Leadership Failure There is Hope in David's Line
  - i. *David's final song - Book conclusion*

What to listen for in Samuel:

- Listen for how God's kingdom comes through trust and dependence on God's strength and power and not by trusting in the false strength of human power, wisdom or ingenuity.
- Listen for how God can deliver you from the darkest and most difficult times; how He will deliver you from all your enemies (ie anything that keeps you from Him).
- Listen for how God's ways are upside down – He looks at the heart not the outward appearance , He uses the humble and dependent not the proud, He blesses the broken not the strong.
- Listen for how the path toward glory is through the testing & refining of suffering.
- Listen for what it looks like to lead others from a heart after God and not after your own approval & control (David vs. Saul).
- Listen for the power of temptation and its consequences.
- Listen for what keeps us from a downward spiral away from God and spiritual influence after failure & sin – repentance.
- Listen for the dangers of neglecting the spiritual leadership of your family. (Eli, Samuel & David).
- Listen for how worship is always the central matter of life. Spiritual leadership is leading people toward continual renewal in worship.

PRACTICE - 2 SAM. 6

1. Pray for Illumination & Transformation

2. Read 2 Sam. 6

3. Reflect together on each part of the A.C.T.S + Gospel community

4. Pray together