

Lesson 2 Lecture - 1 Samuel 2:11-4:1a

(Slide 1) Today we are going to look at this passage in a little different way. I am passionate about Bible study, and I think it is important for us to know how to study the Bible on our own. Each of you ladies need to have the skills to do so.

We are going to work through a simple, repeatable way to study any passage of Scripture for yourself. We are going to do that using 1 Samuel 2:11 through 4:1.

I have made for you a question guide you can ask of any passage when you start to study. This is a simple process. I know, it looks overwhelming, but it is not. This process is often called – OIA. **(Slide 2)** Observation, Interpretation, Application. Observation – what does the passage say? It keeps us anchored in what God actually said. Interpretation – what does the passage mean? Interpretation helps us understand what God meant in the original setting to the original audience. And application – how should I respond? Application brings God’s living Word into our thoughts, our heart attitudes, choices, and relationships.

Often, we read a passage, and we want to jump at once to what does this mean to me? How do I apply it? We need to slow down a little and think about what it would have meant to the original audience. There are many different methods of studying the Bible – this is mine. I hope you have your Bibles – in your lap or in your app! I want you to participate – so have something open. Hopefully you read the passage when you did your lesson, so it should be familiar.

Opening Prayer

(Slide 3) The first thing we are going to do is make observations. Observation questions just ask what the text says before we decide what it means or jump to how we are going to apply it. You don’t have to write these things down when you study a passage. I study with my colored markers and mark the text up.

Let’s talk through the questions on your page and our passage in 1 Samuel 2:11-4:1a.

- **(Slide 4) When did this take place in time or history? Are there time markings that show passing of time.**

This book takes place around 1100-1000 BC. Obviously, we don’t know exactly. The Israelites were living in the land of Israel. The time of the judges ruling was just ending and Israel was transitioning to a monarchy.

Sometimes you will see very specific mentions of time. Later in 1 Samuel we will read “*David lived in the country of the Philistines...a year and 4 months.*” In our passage, we must recognize time is passing, but we don’t see it from the narrative. In this section of scripture, Samuel went from being probably 3 or 4 years old to being probably 12 years in the space of a chapter.

- **Who is the audience or receiver of the message?** Israel

These first 2 questions you wouldn’t need to ask every time you study the same book – obviously those answers won’t change.

- **Who is speaking, writing, or acting in the passage?**

Who wrote 1 Samuel? The author isn't specifically identified. Scholars think Samuel wrote the first part. His death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25. Then it is thought the prophets Nathan and Gad wrote the rest because 1 Chronicles 29:29 mentions their written chronicles.

In 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 11, who is "the boy"? Samuel. Who else is mentioned in this section starting with verse 11 and going through the end of chapter 3? Eli (Priest). Sons of Eli (Hophni and Phineas.) What do we learn about the sons of Eli? Wicked and worthless. Who did we see called "worthless" in our lesson last week? Hannah. Was she? No. Elkanah, and an unnamed man of God. A prophet. The other actor we see is God!

- **(Slide 5) Where is this happening (the geographical setting)?**

This section takes place in Ramah and in Shiloh where the Tabernacle was. I find it helpful to look up places in a Bible Atlas.

- **What are the major events, ideas, or commands?**

Eli's sons committing sins in their priestly duties. Samuel was serving. There were moral sins of Eli's sons. A prophet came and spoke to Eli. The calling of Samuel.

- **What transition words appear (*therefore, however, but, meanwhile, now*)?**

The word "now" is used repeatedly in the ESV in this chapter as a transition. Look at verse 2:12. It starts with "now" – transitioning from Samuel to Eli's sons. We see "now" again in vs 22. The transition from Samuel to Eli. "Now" again in vs 26; a transition back to Samuel. The narrative flips back and forth from: evil sons, Samuel, evil sons, Samuel, judgment on the sons, God's favor on Samuel. The author wants you to contrast them in your head. When I first studied the passage, I underlined every instance of "now" when I started noticing the pattern. What is the first word of chapter 3? "Now" a transition to the call of Samuel. If you use a different version, you may see different transitions.

- **(Slide 6) What comparisons (things that are alike) or contrasts (things that are different) were made?**

- Eli's sons were corrupt; Samuel grew in favor with the Lord and people.
- Eli's sons took from the sacrifices; Samuel served in the presence of God.
- Eli's sons refused correction; Samuel responded when called.
- The word of the Lord was rare; God spoke directly to Samuel.
- Eli's house was under judgment; Samuel was established as a trustworthy prophet.

Why would God put these things side by side? So that we notice the contrast. God exposed corrupt leadership and raised up a faithful servant. God shows honor to those who honor Him, and judges those who despise Him.

- **Is there repetition of words, phrases, concepts? (repetition often shows importance)**

I noticed the verb ministering or serving, depending on your translation, is repeated. Another verb I noticed was "hear." Eli was old and heard all his sons were doing. He heard no good report. I hear of your evil dealings.

In chapter 3, Samuel heard from the Lord repeatedly. Such a difference in the way they heard. Do you remember what the name Samuel means? “God has heard.” There is word play going on here with Samuel hearing and Eli hearing reports about his sons but not hearing from God.

Chapter 3 – there was a word used 12x. Did you notice? “Called.” God is persistent in calling. Samuel didn’t know God yet, but he would soon learn who He was! God was gracious to initiate communication with His people even in a spiritually dark time.

We read 3 times in this section that Samuel was growing. He was growing in stature and favor with God. But Eli’s eyes were growing dim. Do you remember what happened when Isaac’s eyes grew dim in Genesis? He blessed the wrong son. Dim eyes were equated to a lack of spiritual vision.

Samuel repeated “here I am.” He had such willing obedience to get up 3 times when he thought Eli was calling him. In Genesis, Abraham said “Here I am” when God called him and when he was asked to sacrifice his only son, he willingly obeyed. Hearing was related to obedience.

- **Is there a list given?** I don’t see explicit lists here. Often in the NT you will see lists on how to behave or not behave. A list of qualifications etc. Take note of lists when you see them. They are important.
- **If there are pronouns, who do they refer to?** (he, she, them, they, you, me)

There are many pronouns at the end of chapter 2. Me, my, I. The prophet was speaking, but he was speaking God’s Word. The pronouns all refer to the Lord.

Sometimes it is hard to decide who a pronoun refers to. For example, in 3:19 – “*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.*” Who does the 2nd “his” refer to? To the Lord? That Samuel didn’t let any of God’s words fall to the ground? Or the Lord did not let any of Samuel’s words fall to the ground? Sometimes it helps to read a different version of the Bible to give insight. Bible scholars are much more qualified than I am to figure these things out. I went to the Christian Standard Bible, and it says “*Samuel grew. The Lord was with him, and he (God) fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied.*” God didn’t let any of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. This verse is also an example of the next note on your sheet...

- **Are there any figures of speech or idioms?**

In English we might say “it’s raining cats and dogs” or something is “a piece of cake.” That doesn’t mean there are literal cats and dogs falling from the sky, or that something is made of cake. We know what those things mean in our culture. The British will say something has gone “pear-shaped.” No pear is involved, but it means a situation has gone completely wrong. Speaking of “literally” it makes me crazy when people use “literally” in a non-literal way!!!

There are Biblical idioms we might need to stop and look up to understand. Jesus called hypocrites white-washed tombs. We don’t white-wash tombs today, so the saying is foreign to us. Psalm 119 says “*I have become like a wineskin in the smoke.*” What does that mean? Honestly, you can Google what it means and get a good idea.

God let none of Samuel's words "fall to the ground" in verse 3:19 means God fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied. A sign of a true prophet was that everything he said was fulfilled. Samuel proved to be a true prophet of God. Looking a verse up in a different version may help with a figure of speech.

Observation may feel slow at first, but it is never wasted. It protects us from making the Bible say what we want it to say. We focus on what God said.

(Slide 7) Now let's move to **interpretation**. We looked at the basic facts. Exactly what it said. Interpretation questions help us to see deeper meaning and learn core truths. Interpretation asks, "What did God intend to communicate through these words, to these people, in this place in the biblical story?"

- **What literary genre am I reading (narrative, poetry, epistle, prophecy), and how does that affect the meaning?**

What genre is 1 Samuel? Narrative. This isn't just dry history. It is dynamic, character-driven story with plots, tension, and human realism. These were real people with flaws. If you read Psalms, it is poetry which has its own characteristics. We do see prophecy here. The type of genre affects how you view the passage. You would not read a Psalm in the same way you read narrative.

- **What was the main point the author wanted the original readers to understand?** What are core truths?

1. There was spiritual crisis in Israel. 2. God holds leaders accountable. God's judgment was to fall on corrupt human leadership. Israel's worship was led by corrupt men. They were supposed to help people draw near to God but instead dishonored Him. They misused sacrifices and kept the best for themselves. They committed sexual sins. This wasn't just private sin; it was public corruption. As is often true with sin – it doesn't just affect the sinner, it infects those around them. 3. God calls men/women to relationship and to serve Him. And 4, there was a promise to raise up a future faithful servant to honor Him.

- **How do other parts of Scripture help explain or clarify this specific verse/passage?**

This is a good place to look at footnotes and cross references in your Bible. You could go back to Leviticus, like we did in our lesson, to read about the regulations about offerings. You can learn how fat was to be burned as a fragrant offering to the Lord. You can learn about the portion the priests were to take. All this helps you understand the passage more clearly, and to see how wicked Eli's sons were. You can read in Exodus how there were women serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Because here we read Eli's sons were sleeping with them.

When we read God called out to Samuel saying "Samuel! Samuel!" He called his name twice. Is that significant? Can you think of other places God called someone by name twice? Abraham, Jacob, Moses. God often called men by name twice at crucial points in those men's lives.

- **What does this passage reveal about the character, nature, or actions of God?**

(slide 8) I love that question. We see much about God's character here. He was not pleased with the disobedience and contempt of Eli's sons because He is a holy God. •God blessed abundantly and graciously

when He heard Hannah's prayer, answered it, and gave her more children. •God is patient, but His patience can come to an end. •He is the Almighty Judge and always judges justly. •God's faithfulness is shown in performing what He promised. •God's love is shown by communing with His people. •We see God's sovereignty in the choice of Samuel and preparation of him for leadership. We see His omniscience in telling Eli the future. Are you familiar with the word "omniscient?" It means infinite, unlimited knowledge.

You can probably find more characteristics of God than just those. What we learn about God will give insight when we get to personal application.

- **What does the text teach about human nature, sin, or our need for help?**

This text shows a lot about human nature. We see man has the capacity for corruption. Eli's sons, even in the holy tabernacle were corrupt. Religious leaders can be alienated from God. Man is susceptible to self-indulgence. Eli's sons chose personal greed over sacred duty. Eli was lax in disciplining his sons. His failure led to judgment falling on his family. There was abuse of authority by Eli's sons by extorting worshippers. They practiced sexual immorality. They were spiritually blind. The result would be terrible judgment.

Because of the sin going on, 3:1 tells us *"the word of the Lord was rare in those days."* There was spiritual darkness. We see the desperate need for a mediator and faithful high priest. Human nature hasn't changed. To use a biblical proverb: "there is nothing new under the sun." The sins prevalent then are prevalent today.

- **How does this text fit into the larger story of the whole Bible?**

This is a turning point in the storyline of the Bible. God wanted His people to look to Him to be King. The moral failure of the old priesthood was setting up a transition from tribal judges to a monarchy. The book of Judges ended with *"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* Samuel was the last traditional judge. That leads to the next question...

- **How does this passage point forward or look back to Jesus Christ?**

All of the Bible points to Jesus. Every book of the Old Testament looks forward to Him.

This text shows the need for a better priest. One who will obey perfectly. Verse 2:25 says *"If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?"* The Old Testament has pages of regulations for dealing with man sinning against man. For interpersonal wrongs there are earthly judges to deal with those kinds of wrongs. But when man sins directly against God, there is no qualified human intercessor. The only one is Jesus, the ultimate sinless mediator or intercessor.

Verse 26 says *"Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man."*

Hmmm, does that wordage sound familiar? Luke 2:52 – *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."* Luke used the same phrasing to draw a parallel between Jesus and Samuel. You may ask, Laura, how did you find that? In my ESV study Bible, there is a little footnote linking it to Luke 2:52. A good study Bible will help you find those kinds of links to other passages.

1 Samuel 2:35 says *“And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind.”* This is a prophecy. As is often true in the Bible, there will be a near fulfillment of a prophecy and an ultimate fulfillment. When the people saw the near fulfillment of a prophecy, they could also trust in the future fulfillment as well. In this case, God was probably referring to the priest Zadok who we will meet in 2 Samuel. The ultimate fulfillment was Jesus. He is the faithful High Priest who God would raise up.

- **What do we learn about relating to God?**

True relationship with God is personal. Eli’s sons served in the tabernacle, yet they did not know God. It is possible to take part in ministry and not know Him. Samuel started off daily serving God in the temple as a kid – day in, day out in unglamorous daily faithfulness. But 3:7 tells us he didn’t yet know the Lord. God saw every bit of faithful service. For those who know Him, spiritual growth is built on daily faithfulness.

- **What is the meaning of a word in the original language?** (Does the original language give pictures or illustrations to help understand the word?)

Sometimes it is helpful to look up a Greek or Hebrew word. If you looked up the Greek word “baptidzo” which is the Greek for baptize, you would learn it is the picture of a cucumber being immersed in a vinegar solution and turned into a pickle. Doesn’t that give you a different picture of baptize? It is not just dunking in water – it is a permanent change inside. A pickle can’t go back to being a cucumber. Baptism is a picture of a permanent change on the inside.

If you have a phone or a computer, you have the tools to look up words! You can go to Blueletterbible.org. In fact, if you want to follow along, you can pull out your phone and do this along with me. Otherwise, you can watch the slides. We are going to look up the word “anointed” used in 1 Samuel 2:35.

(Slide 9) Go to Blueletterbible.org. Where it says “Search, Verse or Word” type in 1 Samuel 2:35. You can abbreviate “Samuel” as “Sam.” I then changed the Bible version to ESV. It probably always comes up with KJV. You change it by touching KJV or clicking on it. I study the ESV, so that is what I change it to. Now touch the arrow next to it – or the green search button on your computer. **(Slide 10)** You will see the verse come up – now touch “tools.” The tool that automatically comes up is the interlinear. You can see there are other tools you can click on – other Bibles, commentaries, dictionaries etc. Interlinear literally means “written or printed between the lines of a text.” An interlinear will show you the original language and the English translation.

(Slide 11) Now, on your phone, scroll down until you see “my anointed.” Do you see the number there preceded by an “H”? It says H4899. The H means you are looking at a Hebrew word. The number is tied to an indexing system. Like going to the library and non-fiction books have a number tied to the Dewey Decimal System. Here the numbers are tied to Strong’s Lexicon. In the olden days I had a Strong’s lexicon book, and I would turn to the book to find the definition. Since we have the world at our fingertips – you can just touch the number, and it will take you to the Strong’s Lexicon. **(Slide 12)** You can see the Hebrew word for anointed. You can touch “listen” and hear the Hebrew word pronounced. Maw-shee’-akh. If you are doing this on your phone touch “+Show Strong’s info.” If you are on a computer, you can just scroll down. Now you can see the definition. The word translated “anointed” means “usually a consecrated person (as a king, priest, or saint);

specifically, the Messiah.” Later, you can scroll down and find out other information like other places where this word is used.

So, now you wonder, why did we do this? Because anointed also means Messiah. We saw the word “anointed” in Hannah’s prayer. The end of 1 Samuel 2:10 says *“The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”* It is the same Hebrew word meaning Messiah. Hannah’s heart celebrated not only God’s work in her own womb but God’s work in the womb of another ordinary Israelite who would one day give birth to the king God has always intended to rule over his earth, the Messiah King. Who is that? Jesus.

We will see “anointed” when we get to David and God anointed him king and promised him a house and a greater son with an eternal throne. And that too refers to Jesus, the anointed one, the Messiah.

- **Is there any historical or cultural background helpful to know?**

Historical and cultural background is important to understand. We tend to read through the lens of our culture. We don’t really understand the stigma of being childless in that culture. We don’t know what it is like to travel 15 miles on foot through rough terrain 3 times a year to offer sacrifices. I don’t think we really have a picture in our heads of animal sacrifice and the blood involved in that. Historically, 1st Samuel occurred during the early Iron age. Can you imagine not having tools or weapons made of iron? That is going to play into the story in future chapters. We need to read through the lens of their culture and time.

- **Look for warnings.** They are all over the Bible.
- **Look for illustrations.** Jesus often used parables to convey a truth.

And one of my favorites:

- **Look for “so that” statements that show purpose.** When you see “so that” – look for the purpose that normally follows it. For example, Colossians 4:6 says, *“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”* Why does your speech need to be gracious? So that you know how to answer each person. Look for “so that” statements that show purpose. I learned to do that when we were studying John 17. In Jesus’ prayer for his disciples, he would make a request, then have a “so that” statement to show the purpose of why He was asking. That chapter changed how I pray and how I read Scripture.

(slide 13) Application - Now we finally get to where we were tempted to start. What does this mean to me? What do I do with it? How do I apply it? How do I live in response to what we studied? We can’t just read the passage, observe it and then close our Bibles and walk away. God’s word needs to change our hearts. Change our behavior. Change our thoughts.

The observation and interpretation questions lead us naturally to the application. The questions on the handout can guide you in asking questions to help with application. I’m not going to go through each of these

questions – but let's look at our passage and see if we can find application. Obviously, you and I may not choose the same application. What I struggle with may not be what you struggle with.

The core truth of this passage was that Israel was in a spiritual crisis. You might consider "is my life in a spiritual crisis?" "Am I walking with God in sincerity of heart?" We read several times that Samuel continued to grow. Not only was he growing physically, but he grew spiritually into being a man who obeyed God. Are you growing in your walk with the Lord? Can you look back and see that you are closer to the Lord now than you were a year ago? Or not?

Eli couldn't hear God speak. Do you hear God speak? I'm not talking about an audible voice. God speaks through **His Word** today. Scripture is His primary way of communicating to us. Scripture is kind of like glasses we look through. I wear glasses in my old age. Without them distance is fuzzy, reading is hard. But I put my glasses on and I can see clearly. Without our Scripture glasses on our sight is distorted because of sin. I have also noticed that when I have a hard time reading something small, if I put a bright light on it, it is easier to read. I have been known to take a package label with really tiny print to the freezer section of the grocery, I can read it better there held under the bright light. Psalm 119 says *"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path."* God's Word helps us see more clearly. God also speaks through His **Holy Spirit**. When we put our trust in the Lord, He sends the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. In John 14:26 Jesus said *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."* When you get that little nudge – "oh, I shouldn't have said that." Or you were dishonest, selfish, or bitter, and you felt conviction that it was wrong. That is the Holy Spirit.

God speaks through His Word. He speaks through His Spirit. He also speaks through **His people** as we teach and encourage each other. God can use someone else in your life to speak His word to you. Maybe you need to speak truth to someone in your life!

Do you have a listening heart? Often, we approach God with a long list of demands, wanting Him to sign off on *our* plans, rather than pausing to listen to *His* voice. Lord, give me a clean bill of health. Lord, give me safe travel. Give me this job. Put your stamp of approval on my project. Maybe you need to change how you pray. Instead of treating prayer like a cosmic drive-through window, dedicate quiet time to open Scripture and say, *"Speak, Lord, I am listening and ready to obey whatever you say."* Determine to cultivate a listening heart.

We saw the contrast between Eli's worthless sons and Samuel. Are there worthless things in your life? Is there a concrete step you can take today to get rid of something that is worthless? Maybe it is a guilty pleasure of reading trashy romance novels. I am not saying all romance novels are trashy. Maybe it is too much time spent endlessly scrolling Instagram, or shopping for something new. I googled "examples of guilty pleasures" and one example was "comfort food – secret stashes of candy." I confess I have more than one secret stash of M&M's! Gossiping, people-pleasing, dwelling on the past, worrying about the uncontrollable. What are worthless activities in my life? Work on getting rid of it! Take steps! If you don't make a plan, nothing is going to change. A rule I made for myself is no social media before I do my Bible study every morning. Because we all know rabbit trails are endless. You can decide to turn your mind away every time you start worrying about

something. It is a choice. Replace the thought with a Bible verse. Or choose to start thanking God for all your blessings every time an anxious thought comes into your mind. Figure out a concrete step.

One of the repeated words was “hear” or “heard”. In chapter 3, it took Samuel a while to realize God was speaking to him. Do you need to turn off some kind of noise in your life so that you can hear the Lord speaking to you? What concrete change can you make to your daily routine this week to eliminate surrounding noise so that you can “hear” God’s prompting? I know I am guilty of having noise around me. Maybe it is the morning news while I am studying. I listen to podcasts when I drive. I love Zumba classes with loud music. Zumba got me through hard times of taking care of elderly parents. It was the hour when my mind was distracted, and I didn’t think about the difficult things going on. (I recently heard that dancing helps with anxiety. I believe that.) But if I woke up in the middle of the night, a Zumba song would run over and over in my head. Those of you who knew our former beloved teacher, Anne Walls, Anne would often wake up with a hymn in her head. My head was very different. Recently I discovered Lo-fi music. It is characterized by relaxed, down-tempo beats. I currently listen to a group called WyreChoir. They have a recording of Psalm 119 verse by verse. I can sit and listen to it as I study, and I don’t get pulled into catchy lyrics or beats that distract me. It keeps my heart calm and peaceful. I try to be selective about the noise in my life so that I can hear God speaking.

Whatever you decide to apply to your life today – do something! Take a step. If you walk away from God’s Word unchanged you will gradually drift away from God. You will lose joy. Your heart will harden. Take action today.

We must tie the passage to Jesus. How we want to be like Samuel in this passage, but how often are we like Eli’s worthless sons? Romans 5:6-8 says” ⁶*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* We are weak and worthless on our own. As God called to Samuel, he calls to us. Our response needs to be “Here I am Lord.” “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” If you don’t have a relationship with Jesus, today would be a great day to start one. As I close in prayer, if you don’t have a personal relationship with the Lord, today can be the day your life changes. You can pray a prayer like this:

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sin and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow you as my Lord and Savior.