

# 1 Samuel

## IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

### Welcome

*“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”*

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the First Book of Samuel using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Historical Books* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



### Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



### Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



### Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,\* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,<sup>†</sup> taking the form of a servant,<sup>‡</sup> being born in the likeness of men.<sup>§</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>¶</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,<sup>||</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>|||</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.  
14 Do all th tioning,<sup>15</sup> that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

**2:7 emptied himself:** The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

**2:8 death on a cross:** The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

**2:9 exalted him:** By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

**2:10 every knee should bow:** An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

**2:11 confess:** I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

*A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel*

## Prepare

Read the Introduction to 1 Samuel, paying particular attention to the *Content* and *Themes* of the book and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of 1 Samuel to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

## Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of 1 Samuel, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.*

## Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on 1 Samuel as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

### *For understanding*

1. **1:2.** From what standard does polygamy deviate? Why was it tolerated in early biblical history? Whom did Elkanah most likely marry first? In Hebrew, what do the wives' names mean?
2. **1:3.** How does the title "LORD of hosts" describe Yahweh? Where is Shiloh, and what function did it serve?
3. **1:11.** In the Bible, what kind of promise is a vow? What was the only way married women in Israel could be released from a vow? Allegorically, how is Hannah a type of the Church at prayer? On a moral level, what moved God to answer her prayer? According to St. John Chrysostom, how does vigilance at prayer benefit us? How does this passage imply that Samuel is to be dedicated to Yahweh as a Nazirite? In what way is Samuel like Samson and St. John the Baptist?
4. **1:20.** What are two possible meanings of the Hebrew word *shemu'el*? What eight parallels exist between the Samuel story and the Pentateuch that suggest that Samuel is a new Moses? What expectation lies behind these parallels?

### *For application*

1. **1:6–7.** Families often provide occasion for personal rivalries. In your experience, how do rivalries tend to begin, and what provocations are usually involved? How do you believe the Lord wants you to behave when provoked (e.g., when blamed for a perceived fault)?
2. **1:11.** Read the note for this verse. If you have ever made a conditional promise to the Lord in return for some favor, what was the outcome? How quickly did you fulfill your promise? Why is bargaining with God not always a good idea?
3. **1:12–15.** Think of a time when, like Hannah, you "poured out your soul before the Lord" because of a difficult situation. What was your approach to prayer? What spiritual helps did you use (e.g., books, certain devotions)? What did you learn about yourself and your relationship with God from your prayer?
4. **1:27.** What are some examples of prayers you made that were answered favorably? What did you do in thanksgiving for them?

## Chapter 2

### *For understanding*

1. **2:1–10.** As a prayer of praise, what does Hannah's Song celebrate? What is the theme of the song? How is that thematic pattern worked out through the book? How does Hannah's Song, which appears at the beginning of the Books of Samuel, parallel David's Song, which appears at the end? To what other biblical poems is Hannah's Song linked?
2. **2:10.** For whom was the title "his anointed" initially used, and how is it used here? How was the term translated "anointed" (Heb. *mashiah*) used in early Judaism?
3. **2:22.** What is known about the activities and responsibilities of female ministers who served in the Israelite sanctuary? What do later sources say of the women who served in the Second Temple? What are the consecrated women at Shiloh acting like here?
4. **2:31–36.** What does the oracle in these verses announce? When will the end come? In the context of 1 Samuel, what other fall does the fall of the priestly house of Eli mirror? According to St. Augustine, what does the end of the priestly house of Eli prefigure allegorically?
5. **2:35.** Whose house will be raised up in fulfillment of this prophecy? What will the Zadokite line of Aaronic priests constitute? What does Christian faith recognize as the fulfillment of this oracle? How is this most clearly stated in the Book of Hebrews?

### *For application*

1. **2:2.** Why is praise of God one of the highest forms of prayer? If *God* does not need our praise, who does? Why?
2. **2:17.** Look up paragraphs 2118 through 2120 in the *Catechism*. What is sacrilege? Why is it an offense against the first commandment of the Decalogue?
3. **2:22–25.** What responsibility does a parent have for the behavior of his children when they are small, when they are teenagers, and when they are adults? In a situation like Eli's, where his adult children as priests are under his direct authority as high priest, what is his responsibility for their misbehavior?

4. **2:29–30.** What are some ways that modern parents have of honoring their children above the Lord? What honor does the Lord deserve? In Catholic understanding, how does the Lord honor those who honor him?

## Chapter 3

### *For understanding*

1. **3:3.** What lamp is referred to in this verse? What is perhaps the temple referred to here? Where is the Ark of God veiled from sight? From where does Yahweh speak?
2. **3:2–14.** In his call to be a prophet, what does Samuel receive in his first encounter with the Lord? Why does a new chapter in salvation history begin with Samuel's acceptance of his prophetic vocation?
3. **3:17.** What kind of formula is “may God do so to you”? What does it invoke, and how may its nature have been specified?
4. **3:19.** Of what is the Lord's presence in Samuel's life a sign? On what will success and failure in doing the Lord's will depend? What causes Samuel to be recognized as a true prophet and spokesman for God?

### *For application*

1. **3:7.** In the context of this verse, what does “knowing the Lord” mean? How would you describe your “knowledge” of the Lord?
2. **3:9.** Eli offers Samuel some excellent spiritual advice. How do you discern when the Lord is speaking, and how do you listen for his voice? If you are unsure, what are you doing to learn how to listen to the Lord? For example, what spiritual tools are you using?
3. **3:11–15.** Considering Samuel's position, and the message of the Lord about the fate of Eli and his house, why might Eli have been afraid to pass the message on to him? If you had been in Samuel's place, how willing would you have been to inform Eli of impending doom?
4. **3:18.** What do you think of Eli's reply? What do you think Eli should have done in response? How does God warn us today when our wrongdoing or our inaction merits punishment? Can you think of any examples where he has actually issued such warnings to the modern world?

## Chapter 4

### *For understanding*

1. **4:1–11.** What are these verses about? What setbacks do the Israelites suffer, and what are they made to experience in this catastrophe?
2. **4:3.** Of what was the Ark of the Covenant a representation? While it proved devastating to Israel's enemies in the past, what is the problem with Israel's attitude toward its use in this battle, and why?
3. **4:21.** What does the name Ichabod mean? What does it memorialize? How long did the priestly line of Eli continue through Ichabod's brother Ahitub?
4. **Word Study: Glory (4:22).** In what various ways can the word *kabod*, often translated “glory”, be used in Scripture? What does it mean when it refers to the glory of God? Since the Hebrew noun “glory” (*kabod*) is related to the verb “be heavy” (*kabed*), how is it likely the Israelites understood the glory of the Lord, and what would that explain in 1 Samuel with regard to the Philistines?

### *For application*

1. **4:3.** How would you describe the confidence that the Israelites place in the Ark of the Covenant? How might respect for religious objects devolve into spiritual presumption or even superstition? What does CCC 1676 have to say on this subject?
2. **4:11.** Suppose that a major Christian site, such as St. Peter's in Rome, were desecrated or destroyed. What would be the impact on the faith of the Church at large? On your own? In what do Christians place their ultimate hope?
3. **4:21.** Read the note for this verse. How does the name of the child reflect the despair of his mother? If you have children, what motivated you to select the names you did for them? According to CCC 2156–59, what is the importance of a Christian name?

## Chapter 5

### *For understanding*

1. **5:1–12.** Where is the captured ark taken, and to what does its location lead? What do the plagues that ravaged Philistia recall? In both cases, upon whom do the judgments of God come?
2. **5:1.** Where is Ashdod? Of what league is it a part? To what god is it home, and of what is he the god?
3. **5:3.** Although capture of the ark seems to imply that Dagon is stronger than Yahweh, what is the truth of the matter as revealed by the idol's position before the ark?

### *For application*

1. **5:5.** The *Catechism* (2110) describes superstition as “in some sense ... a perverse excess of religion”. How does the behavior of the priests of Dagon in this verse resemble superstitious behavior with which you are familiar? Given the definition of superstition in CCC 2111, how serious a matter do you think superstition is?
2. **5:6–12.** What, if anything, do the Philistines learn from their experience with the Ark of God? What do they seem not to have learned? How does that compare with what happens when people flock to churches during a disaster but return to their old ways once the situation has passed?
3. **5:6–7.** What does it mean to *profane* a religious object? What connection do you see between these verses and what St. Paul says about the consequences of failure to discern the body of the Lord (1 Cor 11:29–30)? In addition to those that Paul mentions, what other consequences might ensue?

## Chapter 6

### *For understanding*

1. **6:7.** What is the idea behind calling for two milk cows upon which a yoke has never been placed? Why take their calves away from them? About what is their lowing perhaps a protest?
2. **6:9.** What does the name Beth-shemesh mean? Although several locations in ancient Canaan bear this name, which one is meant here? To whom was it home?
3. **6:19.** Why would the Lord slay some of the men—Israelites—of Beth-shemesh for looking into the ark?
4. **6:21.** What is the translation of the name Kiriath-jearim? Where is it located? How long does the ark remain there?

### *For application*

1. **6:2.** Read the note for this verse. What forms of divination occur in our culture (see CCC 2116)? Why do people in our “technologically sophisticated” age continue to practice it? Why are Christians forbidden to engage in it?
2. **6:3.** At shrines such as Lourdes, pilgrims sometimes leave personal or medical items as votive offerings. What motivates them to do that? How different is their motive from that of the Philistine diviners?
3. **6:9.** The diviners propose a test to see if the plagues are caused by God or by chance. What are some methods you use to determine whether a course of action is according to God's will? How do you evaluate the results?
4. **6:20.** Of what are the people of Beth-shemesh afraid? How is their reaction like that of the Philistines before the Ark of God? Is their fear of the Lord a virtue (as Scripture indicates it should be) or something else?

## Chapter 7

### *For understanding*

1. **7:3–4.** How do the Israelites respond to Samuel's preaching of repentance? What helps establish Samuel as one of the great intercessors in Israel?
2. **7:3.** What does returning to the Lord “with all your heart” signify? What are the Ashtaroth? To whom is exclusive allegiance stipulated in the Deuteronomic covenant?
3. **7:6.** What is symbolic about drawing water and pouring it out before the Lord? What does Samuel provide as judge of Israel? Who are the last judges in biblical history?
4. **7:12.** How is the name Ebenezer translated? To whom is the boulder propped up as a memorial and named Ebenezer? Of what is it a memorial? What reversal in the story does its location mark?

*For application*

1. **7:3.** What is a “divided heart”? What do Sir 2:12–13 and Jas 1:7 have to say about praying with a divided heart? How does Samuel’s direction to the house of Israel apply to the way you should pray?
2. **7:4.** Why would Israel, who knows that the Lord is its only God, worship the Baals and the Ashtaroth as well? What are some of the ways people have of “hedging their bets”, spiritually, when it comes to seeking divine help?
3. **7:9.** According to 1 Sam 7:8–10 the answer to Samuel’s intercessory prayer is swift. What is your experience with intercessory prayer? To how many answered prayers can you point? What happens to your faith when your prayer seems to go unanswered?
4. **7:12.** Samuel erects a stone as a memorial of answered prayer. How do you memorialize prayers that God has answered for you? What are some spiritual benefits of doing that?

## Chapter 8

*For understanding*

1. **8:1–22.** What crisis moves Israel to clamor for a king? To what does the demand for a Gentile model of government amount? How do scholars often view these verses? Why might their hypothesis be open to question?
2. **8:5.** Why is kingship not wrong in itself, according to Scripture? What, then, is the problem here?
3. **8:9.** What does the Lord have in mind in telling Israelites about the “ways of the king”? What are four ways in which the burdens of a monarchy will outweigh its blessings?
4. **8:10.** What Hebrew wordplay does the text set up for the story that follows?

*For application*

1. **8:7.** What is there about human nature that makes it tend to resist the reign of God? What is the danger to men when God allows them to have things their own way?
2. **8:10–17.** Samuel lists only the drawbacks of a monarchical system of government; what are some of the benefits? What are some of the drawbacks and benefits of our system of government?
3. **8:18.** What is the wisdom in a parent allowing a child to experience the consequences of his actions rather than protecting him from them? How does God act like a parent to us when we choose to act sinfully?
4. **8:19–20.** What is the implied criticism of the system of judges in the people’s reply to Samuel’s warning? How does this amount to a criticism of God? What are the dangers in our being just like everyone else?

## Chapter 9

*For understanding*

1. **9:1–2.** What do these verses introduce? From a human standpoint, what are Saul’s credentials for leadership? Why do none of these natural qualifications carry weight with the Lord? What are we to notice about the lineage of Saul and Samuel, both of whom are God’s answer to requests?
2. **9:9.** What is a “seer”? Why would anyone consult a seer? What is the purpose of the parenthetical explanation?
3. **9:12.** What is the “high place” referred to in this verse? Once Solomon builds the Jerusalem Temple, what will happen to sanctuaries like this?
4. **9:16.** What does the Hebrew term *nagid* mean? How is it used later to describe Solomon, and how is it used here? What will be the top priority for Saul’s reign? How are the words that Yahweh speaks to Samuel similar to those he spoke to Moses, and how is the situation different?
5. **9:20.** Since the question about “all that is desirable” in this verse is slightly obscure, what, in view of the context, are two possible interpretations of its meaning?

*For application*

1. **9:2.** Why do you think studies show that tall, good-looking people are preferred for leadership positions or attain celebrity status more readily than short, plain people? If you had to promote a subordinate to a leadership position, what kind of person would you choose? What do you think God looks for in a leader of his people?

2. **9:8.** Read the note for this verse. What similar custom do Catholics observe when requesting church services at baptisms, weddings, and funerals? What does 1 Cor 9:8–11 say in this regard?
3. **9:21.** Why do you think Saul emphasizes his low status in response to Samuel’s offer of “all that is desirable in Israel?” Is he being genuinely humble, or is some other consideration at work?

## Chapter 10

### *For understanding*

1. **10:1.** How is oil administered in the rite of anointing of priests, prophets, and kings? Of what is anointing a sign?
2. **10:5.** What does the name Gibeath-elohim mean, and to what does it probably refer? How would prophets in Israel minister? What is Samuel’s role in a company of prophets? How would they behave when seized by the Spirit of God?
3. **10:6.** What does the Spirit of God do to leaders and deliverers in Israel? What is suggested by the expression “be turned into another man”? What do scholars often imagine happened to Saul?
4. **10:25.** With what does Samuel, like Moses, provide the kings of Israel? Where is Samuel’s scroll kept?

### *For application*

1. **10:1.** Read the note for this verse. What is the use of sacred chrism in the administration of Baptism? in Confirmation? in Holy Orders? Which of these sacraments makes the person a Christian?
2. **10:6.** What effect does the Holy Spirit have on the soul of a person who is validly baptized? According to CCC 1830, what are the gifts of the Holy Spirit supposed to accomplish in the moral life of a Christian?
3. **10:10–11.** Have you ever known anyone who has undergone a profound religious conversion? If so, what changes have you noticed in his behavior and in the reactions of others to these changes? Has your own behavior been changed because of the action of the Holy Spirit in your life?

## Chapter 11

### *For understanding*

1. **11:1.** Who is Nahash the Ammonite, and what does his name mean? Where is Ammon and to whom is its ancestry traced back? Where is Jabesh-gilead, and what may have been Saul’s connection with it? What kind of treaty do the townspeople propose to Ammonite overlords?
2. **11:14.** What does the expression “there renew the kingdom” probably mean?
3. **11:15.** When is public recognition of Saul’s kingship formally ratified? What kind of prowess do the Israelites want in a king? According to the Greek LXX, who performs the rite of coronation, and how does it affect the period of judges?

### *For application*

1. **11:2.** Modern revolutionary armies sometimes rape or mutilate the people they are attacking. What is their purpose? What is the Church’s teaching on the dignity of the human person? Do such tactics accord with it?
2. **11:6.** What does St. Paul mean when he advises, “Be angry but do not sin” (Eph 4:26)? What kinds of situations arouse a spirit of righteous anger in you? Does your anger result in any kind of positive action, or does it disappear after a while?
3. **11:7.** This verse speaks of the “dread of the LORD” falling on the people whom Saul threatened. What is the difference between the *dread* of the Lord that Saul inspires and the *fear* of the Lord that Scripture espouses?

## Chapter 12

### *For understanding*

1. **12:1–25.** What does Samuel’s farewell speech affirm about Samuel himself, and of what does it accuse Israel? Although Samuel’s career as a judge is ending, why is this not a retirement speech?
2. **12:11.** Who are Jerubbaal, Barak, and Jephthah? Why is it right for Samuel to rank himself among them?
3. **12:12.** According to Samuel, what does the vote for a king really express, and what is it despite?
4. **12:14.** What will observance of the Deuteronomic covenant keep alive? Between what is the choice between the blessings and the curses really a choice?

*For application*

1. **12:14.** Read the note for this verse. How does the choice between covenant blessings and curses apply to us today? What are the concrete, temporal blessings we should expect from loyalty to God, and what are the curses we should expect for disloyalty?
2. **12:20–21.** What effect should the sins of your past have on your spiritual future? What are some of the “vain things” you have pursued in the past that you found could not profit or save you?
3. **12:22.** How does Samuel’s promise to the people of Israel apply to the Church in this century? What moral challenges do the People of God now face, and how should we respond to Samuel’s encouragement not to fear?

## Chapter 13

*For understanding*

1. **13:1.** What words have been lost from the Hebrew text? What help is the Greek LXX in filling in the blanks? What does the historian Josephus contend about the length of Saul’s reign? What does Paul specify about it; and, on the apostle’s reckoning, when would Saul have been king?
2. **13:9.** How is Saul’s behavior a double act of disobedience? According to the Torah, what must the king do, and what could only the Levitical priests do?
3. **13:14.** What does Saul’s disobedience mean he is denied? What is Saul allowed to retain for the time being? What will happen when he defies the Lord a second time? What is the significance of the advance reference to David? According to St. Augustine, what does the change from Saul to David foreshadow, allegorically?
4. **13:21.** What is a *pim*? What do the exorbitant prices for servicing Israelite farm equipment mean that the Philistines are doing?

*For application*

1. **13:5–7.** What is your response in times of spiritual warfare when it seems that the odds are stacked against you? Do you, as the people of Israel did, run for the caves and holes to hide, or do you follow Jesus (even if trembling)?
2. **13:8–9.** Following on the previous question, what do you do when God seems to delay or be silent at the very time you are losing support, patience, or other spiritual and personal resources? What often happens when you give up on prayer and take matters into your own hands?
3. **13:11–12.** Given Saul’s excuse to Samuel for disobeying the latter’s command to wait, what do you think Saul’s real motive was? What is rationalization? What are some occasions on which you have rationalized a decision to act on your own rather than wait for God to act?
4. **13:14.** Read the note for v. 14. What do you think of the severity of the penalty for this one act of disobedience? Why is God not being unjust in warning that the penalty for one mortal sin is eternal punishment? (Hint: refer to CCC 1855–59.)

## Chapter 14

*For understanding*

1. **14:3.** Who is Ahijah? What does Saul take him into his service to do? Where does Ahijah’s brother Ahimelech minister? What is the ephod, and how is it worn?
2. **14:18.** Although the Hebrew text states that the item requested is the ark, how do important manuscripts of the Greek LXX read? What three reasons indicate that the Greek wording might be the original?
3. **14:21.** What possibility exists that Hebrews and Israelites might be two distinct groups? What could explain the Hebrews’ presence in the land? According to Scripture, what is the relation between the two groups?
4. **14:41.** What are the Urim and the Thummim? Who has custody of them?

*For application*

1. **14:6.** According to the note for this verse, Jonathan’s proposal is an example of heroic trust in God despite the odds. What are some acts of trust that you have made despite the circumstances of your life? How can such acts be examples of the virtue of prudence?
2. **14:10–11.** What is the tone of the Philistines’ remark about Jonathan and his armor bearer? How does their attitude toward Hebrews validate Jonathan’s belief that the Lord has given them into his hands?

3. **14:19–20.** Read the note for v. 19. According to the text, why does Saul change his mind about seeking the Lord's guidance? What does Saul's change of mind reveal about his character?
4. **14:43.** Even though Jonathan has inadvertently violated his father's oath, he admits his action without excusing it. How is this an example of the cardinal virtue of fortitude? Although we teach our children always to tell the truth, do our actions always accord with our advice?

## Chapter 15

### *For understanding*

1. **15:3.** What does "utterly destroy" mean here? As stipulated in Deuteronomy, what does this wartime policy require Israel to do? What does strict application of the law forbid?
2. **15:11.** To what does the use of the plural "commandments" in the Lord's rebuke stand in contrast? How does this detail hint at the reason why Saul is rejected as king?
3. **15:22.** What does the Lord regard as more important, sacrifice or obedience? Of what is the separation of moral life from liturgical life a contradiction? What, according to Scripture, makes worship an empty and vain gesture?
4. **15:29.** Although Scripture often speaks of God in a human way or as experiencing human emotions, what do other passages like this one insist about him? What does Scripture affirm about God even while describing him in anthropomorphic terms? What do theologians mean by the term "divine accommodation"? According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, what warning does God's repentance over Saul give to those who grow insolent through prosperity?

### *For application*

1. **15:1–3.** These verses lead into one of what Pope Benedict XVI calls the "dark sayings of the Bible". In your own Scripture reading, how do you deal with these "dark sayings"? How do they fit into your understanding of what the word of God reveals to us about his love and our salvation?
2. **15:11.** The note for this verse refers to a "pattern of disobedience" to God's commands. How does a pattern of actions form a person's character? In the record of Saul's behavior that you have read so far, what details indicate a *pattern* of self-will? As a spiritual parent, how would you recommend that such a pattern be corrected?
3. **15:22–23.** *Why* is obedience better than sacrifice? How are rebellion and stubbornness like the sins of divination and idolatry? What is the internal link between these sins?
4. **15:29.** The note for this verse provides several examples of how Scripture speaks of God in anthropomorphic terms. Can you think of other examples? How do such terms influence your mental image of God and your personal relationship with him? If that mental image is negative (e.g., of the "wrathful God of the Old Testament"), what are some Old Testament passages that present a positive image?

## Chapter 16

### *For understanding*

1. **16:4.** Where is Bethlehem in relation to Jerusalem? In addition to being the hometown of David, whose birthplace is it anticipated to be? How does the evangelist Matthew draw attention to this?
2. **16:11.** Why does the Lord often bypass the wiser and stronger of the world, who appear more qualified to accomplish great things? In part, what is this intended to show?
3. **16:13.** What is the effect of the Spirit of the Lord upon David? What action symbolizes the anointing of the Spirit? How is the presence of the Spirit in David different from his presence in earlier figures? What does the Spirit descending on and abiding with David anticipate?
4. **16:14.** What evil spirit torments Saul? What ability of David gets him a position at court and in what capacity? What does the sending of an evil spirit "from the LORD" mean here? What biblical doctrine does the expression also underline, and to what polytheistic beliefs does it stand in contrast?

### *For application*

1. **16:1.** Why does the Lord correct Samuel for grieving over Saul? How might grief over the fate of a loved one impede you from taking necessary action?

2. **16:3.** Why do you think the Lord directs Samuel to act but says that he will fill in the details only later? How is the Lord's direction to Samuel similar to his call to Abram to go to an unnamed country "that I will show you" (Gen 12:1)? What does the Lord want from you when you pray for direction?
3. **16:6–12.** How do you evaluate the character of persons with whom you want to associate? What role does appearance make in your assessment? What does it mean to base your judgment "on the heart" as the Lord does?
4. **16:14.** Read paragraph 1673 in the *Catechism*. Although the two overlap, how would you distinguish between a psychological and a spiritual problem? What indications would lead you to determine that the problem is primarily spiritual in nature?

## Chapter 17

### *For understanding*

1. **17:4.** What is Gath? How tall is "six cubits and a span"? Why do many scholars think that Goliath was actually six and a half feet tall? Either way, why is Goliath's height seen as colossal?
2. **17:35.** How does David's life as a good shepherd prefigure that of Jesus, the Good Shepherd? According to St. Caesarius of Arles, how is David, who smote the lion and the bear, allegorically a type of Christ?
3. **17:41–54.** From a human standpoint, what makes the duel between David and Goliath a mismatch at every level? Yet why is the mighty Philistine felled? What is the lesson for Israel? According to St. Augustine, what does this scene depict? What do the five stones represent? In contrast to Goliath, on what does David rely? What is significant about Goliath being felled by a stone hurled at his forehead?
4. **17:49.** In what way does Goliath's fall resemble the fall of the Philistine god Dagon before the ark?

### *For application*

1. **17:4–11.** What "insurmountable" enemies do you face? What makes them look so fearsome? What, at bottom, causes you to fear them?
2. **17:16.** What is Goliath's aim in repeating his challenge morning and evening for forty days? What effect does a chronic problem have on a person's confidence in God? How might such a strategy of the devil be thwarted?
3. **17:38–39.** Although David disdains armor, on what kind of protection is he relying? According to Eph 6:10–17, what kind of armor do we need?
4. **17:47.** If the spiritual battle is the Lord's, what is our part in it? How should we act when it appears that the battle is against us?

## Chapter 18

### *For understanding*

1. **18:1–30.** With whom does David's popularity both soar and plummet? By whom is David loved? What is Saul's attitude at first, and how does it change? According to St. Melito of Sardis, where do we see the mystery of the Lord prefigured?
2. **18:3.** What is the covenant Jonathan makes with David? In Israel, as in the ancient Near East, what do covenants create? Thus, what does David consider Jonathan to be?
3. **18:4.** Of what is Jonathan's act of stripping himself of his robe, armor, sword, bow, and girdle symbolic? What has Jonathan somehow learned about David?
4. **18:17–27.** What does Saul pretend to desire? Why is his affection more apparent than real? How does Saul's attempt to rid himself of David ultimately backfire?

### *For application*

1. **18:1–3.** What do you look for in a friendship? How would you describe the difference between an acquaintance with whom you are on good terms and a real friend?
2. **18:8–9.** Read paragraphs 2538–40 in the *Catechism* on the capital sin of envy. Of what are you most likely to experience envy—another's success, possessions, relationships? What can you do to eliminate this sin from your life?
3. **18:17–22.** Many people use relationships to manipulate others' fate. Have you ever been so manipulated or tried to maneuver others to achieve your aims? On reflection, what do you think of the ethics of such activity?

## Chapter 19

### *For understanding*

1. **19:6.** What will the demented Saul do, as he has done earlier with Jonathan?
2. **19:12.** What is the backdrop for David's prayers in Ps 59? From this point forward, what does David become?
3. **19:17.** Why does Michal lie to her father?

### *For application*

1. **19:12.** The note for this verse mentions Ps 59, in which the Psalmist prays for deliverance from those who lie in wait to kill him. Have you ever needed protection or deliverance from evil? How earnestly have you sought the Lord for it? How has he provided it?
2. **19:17.** According to CCC 2488, the right to the communication of the truth "requires us in concrete situations to judge whether or not it is appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it". What is Saul's right to the communication of truth here? What is the morality of lying to protect someone's life (including one's own)?
3. **19:22–24.** God sometimes provides help in surprising ways. What is the most surprising intervention he has made in your life? How did it influence your trust in the Lord?

## Chapter 20

### *For understanding*

1. **20:5.** What part of the month does the New Moon indicate? How was it celebrated in ancient Israel?
2. **20:6.** What attitude does the author of 1 Samuel take toward David's patently untrue excuse to Saul? How does Scripture handle narrating the sins of men? What does St. Augustine say about why God's judgment is revealed or concealed in Scripture?
3. **20:8.** Why does David ask Jonathan to deal kindly with him? How is the Hebrew term *hesed* translated in v. 14 and then in v. 15?
4. **20:42.** Why do David and Jonathan swear "in the name of the LORD"? How will David honor his pledge to Jonathan years later?

### *For application*

1. **20:8.** Read the note for this verse. Has your loyalty toward family or friends been tested in the recent or even remote past? What behavior on your part did the testing involve? Did your behavior strengthen or weaken your relationship with God?
2. **20:15.** What does the word "house" mean in this verse? How can loyalty toward friends apply to their families?
3. **20:23.** To what extent or in what way is the Lord "between" you and your closest friends? In other words, how potentially helpful or harmful are these friendships to your relationship with God?

## Chapter 21

### *For understanding*

1. **21:1.** Where is Nob? Why is it called the "city of priests"? What is stationed there? Who is Ahimelech, and what is his relationship to Eli?
2. **21:4.** What is the "holy bread" mentioned here? As what is it known? Who is permitted to eat it, and what does Ahimelech do for David and his men? When does Jesus appeal to this precedent? Why would Ahimelech specify that David's men have kept themselves from women?
3. **21:7.** What does Doeg the Edomite turn out to be? For which psalm is Doeg's treachery the background? From whom are Edomites descended?
4. **21:13.** Why does David feign insanity before the Philistines? From what is David trying to escape?

### *For application*

1. **21:4.** What is the point of restricting lay people's contact with liturgical objects such as chalices, ciboria, and anything that houses the Eucharistic species? How do such restrictions enhance respect for the holiness of the Eucharist?

2. **21:5.** What contrasts do you note about ancient and modern attitudes toward sexual activity in this passage? Between married couples, when does sexual expression enhance personal holiness, and when does it hinder it?
3. **21:7.** Read Ps 52, alluded to in the note for this verse. How would you apply the psalm to yourself? For example, in what do you place most of your trust for your own welfare?

## Chapter 22

### *For understanding*

1. **22:1.** Where is the cave of Adullam? Whom does David, a fugitive and outlaw, begin to gather to himself in that hideout? For which psalms is David's time in this hideout the backdrop?
2. **22:3.** Where is Mizpeh? Where is Moab? Why does David travel here? What is David's probable family connection with Moab?
3. **22:13.** Why is Saul's accusation of Ahimelech baseless? How has David tricked Ahimelech? How would he have inquired of God for David?
4. **22:20.** Who is the lone survivor of the priestly line of Eli? What does David do for him? Why does Solomon later expel him from the priesthood?

### *For application*

1. **22:1.** In Ps 142, alluded to in the note for this verse, the psalmist complains that he has nowhere to hide and that no one takes notice of him. Have you ever felt abandoned or persecuted by others or even by God? How would you pray at such times, and what would be the tone of your prayer?
2. **22:13.** If you have ever been falsely accused, how serious was the accusation? In such a situation, when is it appropriate for you to defend yourself, and when is it better to exercise the virtue of meekness and leave your defense to the Lord (as Moses and Jesus did)?
3. **22:17.** Why do Saul's servants refuse his order to kill the priests of Nob? What are some examples of physical attacks on clerical persons that have occurred in recent years? Why are such attacks made out of contempt for the clerical office considered more serious than physical attacks made out of dislike for the person?

## Chapter 23

### *For understanding*

1. **23:1–29.** Where do David and his men move about? How does David take each step, and how is he kept safe?
2. **23:16.** How does Jonathan strengthen David's hand? What does Jonathan know about David's trials?
3. **23:27.** Why is the timing of the Philistine raid upon Israel apparently an act of divine Providence?

### *For application*

1. **23:10–11.** David seeks the Lord's guidance by means of the ephod with its sacred lots. What tools do you use to seek the Lord's guidance? For what indications do you look to determine his leading (as opposed to your own preference)?
2. **23:16–18.** What encouragement in your faith do you receive from fellow Christians? Acting on the example of David and Jonathan, what agreements might it be possible for you to make in order to give and receive such encouragement—for example, by forming small sharing groups?
3. **23:27.** Read the note for this verse. CCC 303 says that divine Providence is both concrete and immediate; have you experienced it as such? What is the difference between a mere coincidence and a providential act?

## Chapter 24

### *For understanding*

1. **24:3.** What are the sheepfolds mentioned here?
2. **24:5.** Why does David feel a twinge of regret for cutting off a fringe of Saul's robe? What does David know about the king's anointing?
3. **24:11.** According to St. John Chrysostom, what other victory does David's victory in the cave surpass? Why? What does David's sparing of Saul's life accomplish, spiritually? What application does Chrysostom make of this for us?

*For application*

1. **24:4.** According to the *Catechism* (2264–65), when would killing someone become a legitimate act of self-defense? Does the urging of David’s men to kill the unsuspecting Saul amount to a legitimate act of self-defense?
2. **24:6.** What does David’s respect for “the LORD’s anointed” say about his character? What risk might he be taking with his men by rejecting their urge to harm Saul?
3. **24:12.** What does David say is the right way to get revenge against Saul? According to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:22–25, 44), what should the Christian do when faced with the desire for vengeance?

## Chapter 25

*For understanding*

1. **25:1.** What does Samuel spend a lifetime of service doing? What indicates that Samuel must have been widely admired among the people? Where is the wilderness of Paran? Why do some scholars prefer to follow the Greek LXX rendering of the “wilderness of Maon”?
2. **25:3.** What does the Hebrew name Nabal mean? Why is it a fitting nickname for the man? What is Abigail like? What is a Calebite?
3. **Word Study: A Sure House (25:28).** What does the Hebrew phrase *bayit ne’eman* designate? What is meant by a “sure house”? Which are the two such houses mentioned in 1 Samuel, and what is the idea behind them? What do the words of Abigail anticipate?
4. **25:29.** To what is “the bundle of the living” an allusion, and what common practice does it evoke? What does Abigail mean by wishing that David’s enemies be flung out from the hollow of a sling? What are we to notice about Nabal in this regard?
5. **25:43–44.** Of what is the accumulation of wives a sign? In the Books of Samuel, what does it indicate?

*For application*

1. **25:10–11.** How reasonable is Nabal’s answer to David’s servants, given David’s status as an outlaw? According to the note for v. 8, what should Nabal have done? According to CCC 1937, what is God’s will with regard to sharing goods?
2. **25:21–22.** What do David’s words reveal about his temper? Why does Jesus link anger with the fifth commandment of the Decalogue (Mt 5:22)?
3. **25:24–31.** What are the arguments Abigail uses in her speech to David to placate him? Where does she position herself? What do you think she means by “when the LORD has dealt well with my lord” in v. 31?
4. **25:37–38.** Although the text attributes Nabal’s death to the Lord, what natural cause do you think hastened his death? What happens to a person when his “heart dies within him”? How is the virtue of hope an antidote?

## Chapter 26

*For understanding*

1. **26:1–25.** What events do those in this chapter parallel? What does David’s refusal to take violent action against Saul show about him?
2. **26:5.** Who is Abner? About what will David taunt him?
3. **26:19.** What is the heritage referred to here? What would exile from the land force David to do? What assumption is active here?

*For application*

1. **26:6–11.** If David has no intention of harming Saul, what is the purpose of infiltrating Saul’s camp? Who or what does he expect will deal with Saul’s life? When we are wronged, to whom should we look for vindication?
2. **26:19.** Commenting on the Our Father, the *Catechism* (2795) notes that sin “has exiled us from the land of the covenant”, which is heaven. How are we to return to it?
3. **26:24.** According to CCC 2258 and following, why is human life precious to God? What gives man his dignity as a person, and what end does God have in mind for him (CCC 356–57)?

## Chapter 27

### *For understanding*

1. **27:1–12.** What does David pretend to do, and what is his real aim? How successful are this strategy and the deceitful front he is forced to maintain?
2. **27:5.** Why does David want to move away from Gath? Why does he flatter Achish?
3. **27:10.** Where is the Negeb? Who are the Jerahmeelites?

### *For application*

1. **27:1.** In the previous chapter, David complained of a forced exile that would compel him to worship other gods, yet now he chooses a self-imposed exile for his own and his retainers' personal safety. Has necessity of some kind ever required you to move your home to another location? Did that move separate you from any attachment or relationship? Did you regard the move as permanent or temporary?
2. **27:8–12.** Read the note for these verses. By plundering and weakening Israel's enemies, how is David strengthening his future position against the Philistines? How commendable do you find his ruthlessness?

## Chapter 28

### *For understanding*

1. **28:3.** When did Samuel die? What does Saul accomplish in outlawing the mediums and wizards from the land?
2. **28:6.** For what is Saul looking from the acceptable means of divine revelation? What does the Lord's eerie silence constitute?
3. **28:8–19.** Why does Saul consult the witch of Endor? How does the visit end? What does the Mosaic Law say about necromancy? What does the episode also reveal about belief in life after death?
4. **28:18.** Why does the ghost of Samuel mention Saul's failure against Amalek?

### *For application*

1. **28:1–2.** David's reply to Achish's offer is deliberately ambiguous. What does Achish think he means, and what do you (as the reader) think David means? By equivocating in this way, is David violating the eighth commandment of the Decalogue? (See CCC 2489.)
2. **28:6–7.** What do you do when you seek the Lord for guidance and he seems to be silent? Do you pray harder, adopt Saul's solution, give up, or take matters into your own hands?
3. **28:8–11.** Why does the Church condemn all forms of divination and magic? How are these practices contrary to the first commandment of the Decalogue? Have you ever dabbled in them, even if only in jest? What are some of the spiritual dangers of dabbling in the occult?

## Chapter 29

### *For understanding*

1. **29:1.** Where is Aphek? What happened there earlier in the book?
2. **29:3.** Why are the Philistine commanders not convinced of David's loyalty? What is the attitude of Achish?
3. **29:8.** What is David's response to the request of Achish to stay out of the battle? What is probably his real attitude? What is the difference between what Achish understands in David's words and what the reader understands?

### *For application*

1. **29:3.** According to the note for this verse, Achish is naïve to the point of being gullible. If you have ever been tricked by someone you trusted, what did the betrayal do to your self-confidence? What did it do to your ability to trust others?
2. **29:6–7.** Suppose you were in the position of laying off an employee you valued. How would you announce the layoff in such a way as to soften the blow? What encouragement toward finding another job might you want to provide?
3. **29:8.** If you were in the position of the employee being laid off, how would you respond to the notice? How would you cope with your fears, disappointment, feelings of rejection, or anger toward your employer?

## Chapter 30

### *For understanding*

1. **30:14.** Who are the Cherethites? What will David later do with them?
2. **30:23.** To whom does David attribute the success of his mission? How is the hand of divine Providence made evident in this expedition? How does David thus reason about the distribution of the spoils?
3. **30:26–31.** How are the spoils of the raid parceled out? What might have motivated David's gesture toward southern Judah?
4. **30:31.** Where is Hebron? What will it become?

### *For application*

1. **30:1–6.** People whose homes have been burglarized often say they feel personally violated. How might a victim of such a crime imitate David and strengthen himself in the Lord?
2. **30:23.** How often do you forget to thank the Lord for answered prayer? How important is gratitude in the spiritual life? What are some of the ways you have of expressing it?

## Chapter 31

### *For understanding*

1. **31:1–13.** What happens to Saul in this chapter? In what does his self-destructive behavior culminate? When does the death of Saul occur?
2. **31:9.** Where is Saul's head taken, and what is done with it? What is triumph in battle wrongly taken to mean by the Philistines?
3. **31:11.** Where is Jabesh-gilead? What do the warriors of Jabesh do for Saul?
4. How common in Israel is the practice of cremation? Why is it probably called for in this case?

### *For application*

1. **31:4.** What seems to have been Saul's primary motive for his suicide? What does paragraph 2282 of the *Catechism* say about the moral responsibility of the one committing suicide?
2. **31:9.** Read the note for this verse. According to Samuel's prophecy in 28:16–19, what is the Lord's role in Saul's death? How do you understand Samuel's statement in 28:16 that "the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy"? What would cause the Lord to be anyone's enemy?