

# COOKIES ON THE LOWER SHELF

*Putting Bible Reading Within Reach*

PART II: I SAMUEL—MALACHI

BY

PAM GILLASPIE

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Copyright © 2012 by Pam Gillaspie  
Published by Precept Ministries International  
P.O. Box 182218  
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37422  
www.precept.org

ISBN 978-1-934884-59-1

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Printed in the United States of America

2012

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Putting Bible Reading Within Reach

## **Dedicated to . . .**

Mom and Dad.

You taught me to love the stories and the God of the stories with my whole heart and I am forever grateful!

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to my faithful friends who have studied with me over the years. We've learned that you can read or you can listen and that sometimes filling in all the blanks keeps you from wrestling with the real questions. I'm grateful for your patience in piloting this material and learning with me along the way.

Rick, Pete, Cress, and Dave—thank you for sludging through the editing, proofing, and design process with me. We all know that a book is never, ever a one-person job and I'm grateful to be part of a gifted team.

Brad and Katie—thank you for always putting up with me along the way!

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# COOKIES ON THE LOWER SHELF

*Putting Bible Reading Within Reach*

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans, that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The beginner mercilessly thrown into the deep end of the exegetical? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

Flexible Bible studies are designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing these assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

***Enjoy!***

## WEEKLY READING:

### Main Reading

You'll find this text in the main column of the lesson. Read this—or listen to it—and you'll be able to follow the narrative and stay on track.

### More Reading

These texts will give you more of the story. You'll typically find these located in the **One Step Further** boxes.

### Even More Reading!

Finish these readings, too, and you'll read through the entire Bible by the time you finish the *Cookies* series. These readings are often in the **Digging Deeper** boxes.

# How to use this study

Flexible inductive studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

**1. WEEKLY STUDY:** The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

**2. FYI boxes:** For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

### FYI:

#### Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

**3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes:** Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

### ONE STEP FURTHER:

#### Word Study: *torah/law*

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah*, translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

**4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes:** If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

### Digging Deeper

#### What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

# Intro Week

## Catching Up and Catching On

*The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.  
The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.  
They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

—Psalm 19:7-10

I love starting back into Bible study refreshed and ready after a break! As we get going in part two of this three-part study, though, I'm aware some of us are jumping into the pool for the first time while others are already accustomed to the water. Because of this, this week's lesson will be divided into two parts—the first for newcomers and the second for those who've completed *Cookies on the Lower Shelf, Part One*. By next week we'll all be swimming together so if you're concerned at all about getting up to speed, let it go and know that you'll catch up and catch on!

### THIS WEEK:

#### Main Reading

This is where you'll find the texts for the main narrative. If you keep up with this section (either through reading or listening), you should feel comfortable with what's going on in class. If you don't, well, come to class anyhow as there is always something to learn and always grace to get back up and keep pressing on.

Additional Reading \_\_\_\_\_

#### More Reading

I'll provide additional reading in this section that will be beneficial but not critical to understanding the main gist of what's going on. Read these chapters if you have the time and the desire but don't sludge through it just to check it off. Genealogies often fall into this category as well as extended exposition of Old Testament Laws.

#### Even More Reading!

For those wanting to read through the whole Bible, the extended reading section is where you will typically find longer texts that aren't critical for grasping the overall narrative of the Bible. Large sections of the prophets, for instance, will fall into this section.

## MEMORIZE:

### Why not memorize?

If you have time this week, memorize this critical truth from Psalm 19:7b.

If you have lots of time, consider memorizing Psalm 19.

It's only 14 verses long!

*The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

*—Psalm 19:7b*

## IF YOU'RE NEW TO THE CLASS . . .

This week we'll take some time to consider what our patterns with respect to Bible reading have been in the past and we'll make a light-speed dash through the Old Testament up to the book of Judges. I'd suggest you keep your arms and hands inside the vehicle!

## CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

What kind of success or failure have you had in reading the Bible?

How have you approached reading and/or studying?

Have you noticed any specific barriers to reading? If so, what?

What has worked for you?

Do you have any apprehension about this study? If so, what?

What are your expectations? What do you hope to learn during this class?



## Here's where we've been so far . . .

*Five-Minute Survey of the Old Testament*

In the beginning **God** created. **Adam** was the first man created, **Eve** the first woman. God created them without sin and placed them in the **Garden of Eden**. The serpent (later identified as Satan), however, quickly deceived them. Eve ate the forbidden fruit (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) first and gave it to her husband Adam. Through this act of sin death entered the world, and God banished Adam and Eve from the beautiful garden to prevent them from eating from the tree of life in their sinful state.

Although **man rebelled** against God, God immediately predicted the coming of a Savior who will crush the head of the serpent (Messianic Covenant). Jesus eventually fulfills this prophecy but in the meantime sin and death rule the day.

Eve bore Adam many children, the first two being **Cain and Abel**. Cain, resentful that God rejected his offering and accepted his brother Abel's, murders Abel. Sin gained speed and man continued downhill until God had simply had enough.

Saying He regretted making man, God told **Noah** to build an ark in which he and his family would be saved from the coming destruction—a **worldwide flood**. Noah obeyed and God saved him, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. After the Flood, God placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with all living creatures that He would never again destroy the entire earth by water.

Noah's sons, **Japheth, Shem, and Ham** became fathers of all the nations. Over time the population of the world increased and people again veered off course. In pride they determined to build a **tower reaching to heaven** but in the midst of construction God confused their languages and thwarted their plans.

### ONE STEP FURTHER:

#### What is this?

**ONE STEP FURTHER** sidebars give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These optional assignments provide the ultimate in flexibility.

### FYI:

#### What is this?

**FYI** (For Your Information) boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic at hand.

**Abraham**, originally named Abram, is the first major character on the scene after the Flood. Abram and his wife Sarai (whose name later changed to Sarah) lived in the land of Ur. God told Abram to leave his land and go to another one He would show him. **Abram trusted God** and packed his bags, taking his wife and household with him. Although God changed his name to Abraham and promised to make him a great nation, Abraham was within view of triple-digit old with no blood-related heir in sight.

What he did have, though, was a get-'er-done wife. After waiting "long enough" Sarah decided to act. She gave her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham as a second wife to scoot God's promise along. Not a good idea. Hagar did bear Abraham a son named **Ishmael** but Sarah resented the outcome. Ironically the son of Sarah's plan was not the son of God's promise. He would be born later to Sarah.

**Isaac** was God's fulfilled promise to Abraham. Like his father, Isaac possessed a promise of descendants but had no children for the first 20 years of his marriage. Isaac, though, prayed for his wife Rebekah and God caused her to conceive twins, Esau and Jacob.

Although **Esau** was tough, he was spiritually dull. **Jacob** was instigating and conniving like his mother. Although older, Esau was tricked out of his birthright and blessing respectively by his younger brother and mother.

**God chose Jacob** long before He changed his name to . . . **Israel!** Hence, the nation of Israel. Turns out deception ran in Jacob's family. After besting his brother twice, Jacob ended up on the other end of a bait-and-switch. Uncle Laban gave **Leah** to Jacob as a wife after he'd worked seven years for her sister **Rachel**. Although Jacob set out to marry only Rachel, he ended up with Rachel, Leah and each of their handmaidens. From Jacob and these four women descended the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's most famous son was **Joseph**, the guy with the "amazing technicolor dream-coat." Because he was also his father's favorite, his jealous brothers sold him into **Egyptian slavery**. Eventually God raised him up to be the equivalent of Vice-President of Egypt and reunited him with his family who **relocated to Egypt**.

After **Joseph died**, everything was stable until a Pharaoh arose who “didn’t know” Joseph. He decided to enslave Joseph’s family, now called the Hebrews, who had grown to great numbers in the land. The Hebrews remained **enslaved for 400 years** until the time of **Moses**.

Because the Hebrew population grew so rapidly, Pharaoh ordered **all male Hebrew babies killed**. He feared the slaves would turn against him should a foreign country invade. Moses’ mother hid her newborn baby boy in a basket and set it on the Nile River in an effort to save him. None other than Pharaoh’s daughter drew the basket from the water and raised him as her own. As an adult, young Moses intervened in a fight between an Egyptian and one of his Hebrew brothers, killing the Egyptian. He subsequently **fled Egypt** and became a shepherd in the **land of Midian** for forty years before God called to him from a **burning bush** and sent him **back to Egypt** to lead the people **out of bondage**.

Although resistant at first, Moses obeyed God and after a series of **ten plagues** and a celebration of the first **Passover** led the Hebrews on their way to the **Promised Land**. Along the way God **parted the Red Sea**, fed His people **manna**, and led them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. Although the people arrived at the Promised Land quickly, ten of **twelve spies** sent into the land reported a population of giants. Instead of trusting God’s promise, the people shrank back in fear. God accordingly made them wander in the wilderness for forty years before they finally entered the Promised Land.

Moses saw the Promised Land from afar but **Joshua** crossed the Jordan and led the people into it. Under his leadership the famed walls of **Jericho fell** and the people, more or less, followed God. When Joshua died, though, the people returned to their wandering ways, lured into sin by the peoples in the land they had not driven out.

Into this rebellious situation, God sent **judges** to deliver the people when they called to Him for help. Some of the more notable judges included **Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel**.



# Week One

## I Samuel . . . Entering the Narrative

*Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"  
And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."*

—1 Samuel 3:10

First Samuel is far and away my favorite starting point for reading through the Bible! It may sound strange to start in the middle but hear me out. Many people repeatedly try reading through the Bible from the beginning. The majority give up somewhere between the end of Exodus and the beginning of Numbers. That was my story every January. The bright side of trying and failing to read through the Bible from the beginning for me was this: I locked in on a solid understanding of the foundational book of Genesis.

If you've just picked up the study without having studied *Cookies, Part One*, take heart. Genesis through Deuteronomy are foundational books that you'll want to read eventually (if you haven't already) but 1 Samuel is a fantastic place to start reading God's Word! In fact, it is one of the biblical books we will read in its entirety as it is engaging narrative from beginning to end!

We're entering a portion of Scripture where we'll do well to ignore chapter and verse breaks and let ourselves be swept into the events the way we would be swept along in an engaging novel though keeping in mind that *these* accounts actually happened. Also remember as you're reading that we can learn as much from people's failures as we can from their successes in following God.

### THIS WEEK:

#### Main Reading . . . . . 12 chapters

- 1 Samuel 1-3: Samuel, the early years
- 1 Samuel 4-7: The Ark of God and the Philistines
- 1 Samuel 8-12: "Give us a king!"

#### Additional Reading \_\_\_\_\_

#### More Reading

If you have extra time this week, dive into the **ONE STEP FURTHER** and **DIGGING DEEPER** boxes. In the upcoming weeks there will be more than enough additional reading to satisfy and challenge you! For now simply begin reading and enjoy.

#### Looking Ahead . . . . . 1 Samuel 13-31

This is just to let you know where we're heading next. If your schedule's free now but you have a packed week coming up, go ahead and read (or listen!) ahead. Let it flex!

## FYI:

### **I Love *The Bible Experience***

There's more than one way to take in God's Word. Reading is one way but in our MP3 age one of my favorite ways for incorporating the Bible into the everydayness of life is through a dramatic presentation of the Bible called *The Bible Experience*. If you have an iPod or other MP3 player, check out [www.bibleexperience.com](http://www.bibleexperience.com). You may only read two or three chapters of God's Word if you have to sit down and disengage from everything else to do it but you'll be staggered by how much you'll take in if you listen while you're folding clothes, cleaning the kitchen, driving around town, or making dinner. Trust me!

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **Unanswered Prayers**

How do seemingly unanswered prayers impact your faith? If you have some extra time, thinking through scriptural truths can help if you struggle in this area. Record your observations below.

## Following the Story . . .

God. Creation. Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel. Seth. Enoch. Noah and kin. Babel. Abraham and Sarah. Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob and the twelve tribes. Joseph. Egypt. Enslavement. Exodus. Wilderness. Jordan River. Gilgal. Jericho. Possession of the Land. Rule by judges: Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, et al.

## REMEMBERING

If you studied *Cookies, Part One* take a couple of minutes and summarize the high and low points of the time of the judges.

## READING THE STORY:

### **OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** 1 Samuel 1–3.

**RECORD** a summary of this section.

**RECORD** key words and phrases you noticed.

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Who are the main characters in 1 Samuel 1? How are they related?

What specific problems does Hannah face? What modern equivalents do you see in some of her problems?

How does she initially react?

How does her husband try to help? How effective is he?

How long does Hannah suffer? How does she eventually deal with her circumstances?

When does she find peace? Is it before or after her prayer is answered?

What principles can we apply from Hannah's life?

How will you respond if you give your burdens to God and He answers contrary to your desires or is silent for a time?

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **So what tribe was Samuel from?**

If you have extra time this week see what you can find out about Samuel's origin. The NASB text says he was an Ephraimite but we see him functioning as a priest. What should we make of this? Is it a contradiction or is there another explanation? Reason through your findings and cite your sources.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: *Asked/Dedicated*

The text tells us Hannah *asked* God for a son and then *dedicated* him to God. Take some time this week and see what you can find out about those two words. Record your findings below.

## Digging Deeper

### Examining the Elephant in the Room

A cursory read of 1 Samuel shows Hannah in a bad situation. She prays and God gives her what she asks for. It seems that what began as a sad story is going to have a happy ending but the narrative doesn't end with Samuel's birth. The child grows and eventually Hannah fulfills her vow as she delivers her precious son to the LORD's temple in Shiloh.

Leaving a small child at the temple would be hard enough on a mother's heart but what turns this account on its head is the spiritual condition of the temple. At this point in Israel's history, God is not being honored there. If you have some time this week, see what you can discover about Eli, his sons, and worship at Shiloh. Here are some questions to get you started:

What do we know about Eli? Consider age, physical appearance, and anything else you can find in the text.

What does the text say about his two sons? What characterized their behavior?

Reason through this. Who was going to raise Samuel and what was his track record? What was the likelihood that Hannah knew this? Explain your answer.

How did God show Himself faithful to both Hannah and Samuel?

Record further finds and observations below.



What can we learn about Hannah's view of God from her prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10?

Is your view of God conditioned on how fast He responds to your prayers? Should it be? Why/why not?

What does Samuel do at the temple? What do Eli's sons do?

Into what kind of moral climate did Hannah relinquish her son? Do you think the situation required greater faith on her part? Why/why not?

What were Eli's sons dedicated to? Where did they learn their behavior? (See v. 29.)

How does God deal with Eli with respect to his rebellious sons?

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: *kavod*

If you have some extra time this week, take a look at the Hebrew word for *glory* and see what you find. What does it mean and what significance does it play in the text? Record your findings below.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Sight and Sound

Mark all sight and sound related words in 1 Samuel 3 and see what you learn. Record your findings below. This is one of those places a list may come in handy!

How does Samuel differ from Hophni and Phinehas?

According to 1 Samuel 3, what is the state of Israel's relationship with God?

How is Eli's physical condition similar to Israel's spiritual condition?

What significant event happens to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3? How does Samuel change as a result?

What message did God have for Eli? How does this compare with the first message He sent to him? What does this say about the authenticity of Samuel's words?

Where is Samuel at the end of the chapter? How credible is his word?

# Digging Deeper

## Staying at God's Place

First Samuel 3:3 says "Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was." What other biblical characters "hung out" in similar ways? What are their stories and what can we learn from them? Think both Old and New Testaments.

What about boundary-crashers? What can we learn from those who tried to barrel into God's presence in their own ways? Who are some examples and what consequences did they reap?

**FYI:**

**The Five Cities of the Philistines**

When you think of the Philistines, the number five should come to mind. The Philistines, one of Israel's most significant enemies, lived in five city-states along the Mediterranean Sea. You can see them clustered in the map below to the west of Jerusalem. They occupied the land that the tribe of Dan was supposed to take possession of as their inheritance.



**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** 1 Samuel 4–7.

**RECORD** a summary of this section.

**RECORD** key words and phrases you noticed. Consider **MARKING** references to the *Philistines* and the *ark of the covenant* (also called the *ark of God*).

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

Who is fighting Israel in 1 Samuel 4? How does the text describe them? What else do you know about them?

What decision do the elders of Israel make in response to losing the battle? How are Hophni and Phinehas involved?

What happens to Eli?

What happens to the ark of the covenant? How do the Israelites react?

What happens when the ark makes its way through Philistine cities? What do the Philistines eventually do and why?

What shocking event happens when the ark returns to Israel? What lesson do the people learn?

What is a proper response to the holiness of God? How do we do today at treating God as holy? Give an example if you can think of one.

How much time passes while the ark is at Kiriath-jearim? What is the condition of the people's hearts?

What instructions does Samuel give Israel for returning to God? Include both what they are to abandon and what they are to do.

Is there anything you need to abandon in order to follow God with a whole heart? If so, what?

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **Who is it?**

Take some time this week to see if you can answer the following question:  
*Who is the faithful priest of 1 Samuel 2:35?*

Reason through your answer based on the text. When you're done compare your findings with a couple of commentaries and record your findings below.

When Israel turns to God, what happens in the subsequent go-round with the Philistines?

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** 1 Samuel 8–12.

**RECORD** a summary of this section.

**RECORD** key words and phrases you noticed. If you're **MARKING** your text, don't miss the word *king*.

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

To your knowledge, what kind of leadership has Israel had up to this point? What happens after Samuel appoints his two sons as judges?

Why do the people want a king? How does Samuel respond? What does God say?

What does God warn the people about kings?

Who does God appoint as the first king over Israel? How does the scenario unfold?

In what ways do we reject God's kingship over our lives today? What do we reap in our lives as a result?

How does Saul's reign begin? Based only on what you've read this week, would you bet for him or against him? Explain with specific examples from the text.

### @THE END OF THE DAY . . .

It's my prayer that you're enjoying the text of 1 Samuel like you'd enjoy a well-loved novel, that the pace is neither too fast nor too slow. The train will pick up speed in the next couple of weeks but for now think about what you've read, consider the lives of those you're meeting, and ponder the fact that God's true story continues and you and I are part of it!

As we close, quietly spend some time with God and ask Him to help you focus on one specific truth He's impressed on your heart through His Word this week. Jot the truth down below and rest in His sovereignty to help you live in light of it.

## Notes

Week One: **I Samuel . . . Entering the Narrative**

### FYI:

#### From Dan to Beersheba

Dan was located waaaaay north in Israel and Beersheba was waaaaay south. So saying "from Dan to Beersheba" was something of a north-south Israelite version of the east-west American phrase "from sea to shining sea."



