

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 446

1 Samuel Introduction

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### Episode Summary

Beyond the stories of Hannah and David's battle with Goliath, the book of 1 Samuel tends not to be well known. This episode of the podcast kicks off a series covering the book. 1 Samuel is a theological history of the beginnings of Israel's monarchy. There are not only many intriguing episodes in its pages, but it also teaches valuable lessons about accepting God's sovereign rule and turning from half-hearted devotion. God is king in 1 Samuel and its content brings home that lesson.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 446: 1 Samuel Introduction. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he is the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Oh, a little bit better today. I had a rough last week, you know, the previous week, but I'm feeling a little bit better.

**TS:** Yeah, you're done with the radiation as of now so that's good.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** That's great.

**MH:** Yeah, finally over that hill.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely, and do you know when you're going to get the new MRI?

**MH:** They wait at least a month.

**TS:** Oh.

**MH:** So it's going to be at least 4 or 5 weeks, I would say, until I get an MRI.

**TS:** Okay. I gotcha. Well, good deal. Well, hopefully things will turn out great. And in the meantime, Mike, you decided to do 1 Samuel! You said that's been on your mind lately.

**MH:** Yeah, it has been. So I just thought we'd jump in. It's just something I feel like doing.

**TS:** Hey, that's great. I love it. That's quite a surprise and we'll take it, man. We'll take it. I take it we have no idea how many episodes or what, but we'll take whatever you can give us.

**MH:** Yeah. Yeah, no idea. We'll see if we're going to loop 2 Samuel into it later, but for right now, at least 1 Samuel. I felt like doing something Old Testament and when we get toward the end of 1 Samuel, we'll know if we're going to do Second or if we're going to toss something up for a vote or what we're going to be doing.

**TS:** Ok, great, great. Well, I'm ready, Mike, if you are.

**MH:** Alright. Yeah, this is going to be a bit of an experiment. I should confess that up front because I am going to try to go with a format for each episode beyond this one. As is our custom when we get into book studies, we always spend an initial episode introducing the book a little bit. But after this as we work through sections of the book, I'm going to try to give it a certain format and you'll be introduced to that next week when we jump into the first unit in 1 Samuel. But it's a bit of an experiment. But for today, I just want to talk a little bit about the book, and I'm going to be quoting from a number of sources, as is typical for us to do. I mean, my job in all of this is to go through a lot of material and pull out things that would be interesting for the audience or things that would be important to know, and this will be no different.

We need to sort of realize a few things up front about 1 Samuel as we introduce the book here. The first one of those is that 1 Samuel (and, for that matter, 2 Samuel) is part of a larger literary work. If you get into the academic literature, you're going to be seeing the phrase "Deuteronomistic history" or "the Deuteronomist" or something like that. I'll comment a little bit later on about what exactly *that* is, but everybody in the field acknowledges that 1 Samuel (and again, of course, 2 Samuel as its partner) belongs to a larger literary work within the Hebrew Bible. So it is not a book in isolation. I'm going to read from Harry Hoffner's *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* on 1 Samuel, which is one of my favorites. Hoffner writes:

It is freely admitted that 1 and 2 Samuel were once one book and were subdivided—initially only in the Septuagint, and subsequently in the Hebrew copies—because the text was too long to fit on a single scroll. But there is a larger

question that goes beyond practical issues of scroll capacity. Ancient cuneiform compositions often spanned several tablets. They did not need to go by different names on the colophon of each tablet; rather, the sequence was indicated by tablet number or by a catch line [MH: between the tablets]. There is no particular reason why a large Hebrew composition—one that may have spanned the entire history of the Israelites in their land—could not have existed on several scrolls. These scroll-capacity-delimited “books” (סֵפָרִים, *sepharim*) may have eventually received individual designations, such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

5:00 That’s the end of what he has to say on that matter. And again, this is standard representation to where scholars of all stripes are at. 1 Samuel is part of this larger work that goes from Joshua all the way to the end of Kings. It’s the history of the monarchy. It’s the history of Israel in the land, more broadly, and 1 Samuel is part of that. It’s only when you get into the Septuagint that these things are divided out into books. As far as the books and their names, there is kind of an analogist situation with the Torah here. In the Hebrew Bible, the books are named after words in the opening line of each book. It was only with the Septuagint that names were given to the books. For instance, Genesis in the Hebrew Bible is *bereshit*. It’s the first word of the text. In the Septuagint, it is called Genesis. That’s where we get the name from. Exodus in the Hebrew Bible is *ve-elleh Shemoth*. Now these are the names, but in the Septuagint it’s *Exodos*. We could go all the way through the first five books of Moses, but you get the idea that in the Septuagint... The Septuagint is the one that actually assigns names to these things, as opposed to just calling a book at its head according to some aspect of how the book begins. So Hoffner again writes:

The ancient Jewish scribes did not follow the naming procedure used for the five books of Moses in the Former Prophets.

And you have to know a little bit about how the Hebrew Bible is divided. The former prophets are books like Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, so on and so forth.

The ancient Jewish scribes did not follow the naming procedure used for the five books of Moses in the Former Prophets. Instead, they assigned individual books a “title” based upon subject matter: Joshua because he was its central character, Judges because the book was about a sequence of savior-leader figures called “judges,” Samuel because he was the first significant character in 1-2 Samuel, and Kings because 1-2 Kings was a chronological sequence of narratives about the reigns of successive Israelite and Judaeen kings. This procedure of naming the books obscures the unity of the series. But the scribes had other ways of indicating the unity of the series. All but the first of the five books of Moses begin with the conjunction (*w*) (“and”)...

If you can imagine this... I know this doesn't translate well to audio, but that's the Hebrew conjunction (w) ("and"). All five books of Moses begin with that except for Genesis.

...showing that they always were a single series. Likewise, all the books from Joshua through 2 Kings begin with "and," and Joshua itself is linked to the five books of Moses by the same conjunction.

That's the end, again, of what Hoffner has to say there. So the scribes had ways of stringing these things together to show that they belonged together. We're just not used to doing things that way. We're more used to what the Septuagint does or giving it some name that really arises out of, not who wrote it, but who the main character is or something significant about the book itself.

Now 1 Samuel is simply named after Samuel, who was the first significant character of the book. It's not necessarily the convention of the Septuagint because you'll have this naming convention as well in the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint of 1 and 2 Samuel is actually called "1 and 2 Kingdoms, and 1 and 2 Kings are "3 and 4 Kingdoms." Together, these four books (1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings) tell the story of the ancient Israelite monarchy from its beginning to its demise at the Babylonian exile. So that's essentially how the book was named and ordered.

As far as authorship goes, Hoffner writes this. He says:

Because 1 and 2 Samuel was originally just one arbitrarily delimited section of a grand historical work containing our books of Joshua through 2 Kings, it is pointless to inquire who "wrote" or "composed" it. Like the rest of the material in Joshua through 2 Kings...

Which spans a considerable chronology. (Just throwing my editorial comment in here.) I mean, think about the chronology that those books span. You're not going to have one author, is his point. So he says:

Like the rest of the material in Joshua through 2 Kings, the material of 1 and 2 Samuel was drawn from a large number of sources, both textual and oral... Much of the material dealing with the reigns of Saul and David could have been preserved in written form in the palace archives of David and his successors. This archival material was then supplemented at a later date by additional accounts preserved (either orally or textually) outside the palace proper... Because of this procedure, one must think in terms of both single "authors" of parts of more than one "book" in this grand historical work, and of many more than just one contributor to individual books and even individual parts of single books.

10:00

So that's Hoffner's way of saying there are a lot of hands that touched the larger work of Joshua through 2 Kings, of which 1 Samuel is a part. And in view of that, when it comes to the date, it should be clear that 1 and 2 Samuel are considered part of one literary whole that extends from Joshua through 2 Kings. And this affects any guess at dating the book because one must also think about the date of the larger work. This composition, again, is presumed to have been completed at some time during the exile because the larger work ends with 2 Kings with them going into exile. So we presume that the entire work was completed sometime during the exile (likely near the beginning of the exile) because 2 Kings ends with them going into exile. 1 and 2 Kings were written during the early monarchy, meaning our 1 and 2 Kings were written roughly contemporary to the events they describe. During the monarchy and exile, though, it is conceivable the books of 1 and 2 Samuel incurred editorial updating or new material, as relevant to the content and larger picture of the monarchy, its history, and God's activity with Israel through the prophets who preached during the monarchy.

So that brings us to this matter of the Deuteronomistic history. Again, this is a phrase that you're going to see in academic literature about this larger work (at the very least Joshua through 2 Kings, but you can already tell by the title that some scholars throw Deuteronomy into this). But anyway, the Deuteronomistic history presents this work as a whole and there's nothing controversial about that. What is controversial about the whole nomenclature is the inclusion of Deuteronomy. Basically, everyone in the field accepts that Joshua and 2 Kings was originally one work. Controversy arises when Deuteronomy gets married to this work because it means Deuteronomy is not Mosaic in origin. So that's what people like to fight over. Deuteronomy gets lumped into this by some scholars because its laws were the basis for judging the monarchy. Deuteronomy includes the rules for kingship, for example, and so the supposition is since Deuteronomy has rules for kingship, it makes sense to include it in this larger work of Joshua through 2 Kings, but of course other scholars are going to disagree with that when it comes to authorship of the Pentateuch. As one goes through Joshua through 2 Kings in Hebrew, one finds allusions to Hebrew material in Deuteronomy for sure. So again, there is a logic to it. It's not just arbitrary. There are actual reasons why some scholars think this and have Deuteronomy much later than the time of Moses, in accord with the authorship of the larger work (Joshua through 2 Kings).

I am going to read a little bit from Sandra Richter's entry in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament*—the Historical Books. She has the essay on the Deuteronomist—the Deuteronomistic History. She writes:

As George Mendenhall first recognized in 1954, the literary form of the book of Deuteronomy is an intentional echo of the international diplomatic texts of the ancient world. In other words, the *theological* foundation of Israel's self-understanding is structured as a *political* agreement that dictates the precepts by

which Yahweh and Israel had agreed to govern their relationship. Hence, the land grant of Palestine, the laws of loyalty, tribute and war, the blessings that would result if this bilateral agreement were kept, and the curses that would be enacted if it were broken are all articulated in the opening chapter of the Deuteronomistic History.

### Again, which would be in this view—in the Deuteronomistic History of Deuteronomy.

It is this opening chapter that lays the foundation, sets the tone, and predicts the outcome of Deuteronomistic Historian's history: Israel will rise and fall based on its ability to keep covenant.

Let me add a quote here from Raymond Dillard in his *Festschrift for Dr. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes*. He wrote an article called "David's Census: Perspectives on 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21." He puts it this way:

Deuteronomy provided for the day that the people would want a king [MH: that's Deuteronomy 17:14-20], so the [Deuteronomic] historian reports what life was like both without a king (Joshua, Judges) and with a king (Samuel, Kings); it is largely a record of the disobedience of the people and the faithfulness of God.

So Dillard is saying again that the whole Deuteronomistic History is largely this record of obedience or disobedience. Now obviously, this does get us into the matter of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Contrary to traditional readings, I don't think the New Testament phrase "law of Moses" must require his authorship of all the Torah, and this audience are familiar with that being my perspective. Even if Moses didn't write Deuteronomy or some other part of the Torah, it is natural to refer to the content as Mosaic since Moses is the main character, and in Deuteronomy's case, the speaker throughout the book. And that's Deuteronomy; it's a series of sermons by Moses. So I'm comfortable with where Hoffner is at on the issue of the Deuteronomistic History and all that. Let me read to you, again, from Hoffner. He says:

Contrary to the view of those who limit the influence on the Former Prophets to Deuteronomy...

Catch that sentence:

*Contrary to the view of those who limit the influence on the Former Prophets [MH: Joshua through 2 Kings] to Deuteronomy, one should recognize that the entire Pentateuch forms an essential backdrop for the understanding of the Former Prophets. Yahweh, the God of Samuel, Saul, David, and the prophets, was the creator God of Gen 1–2, the judge and savior God of Gen 6–9 and 18–19, the*

covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12–50), the liberating God of the exodus, and the law-giving God of Sinai (Exodus–Deuteronomy). One cannot pigeonhole the Former Prophets or the “Deuteronomistic History” into a straight-jacket of dependence only upon one book of the Torah. To read the Former Prophets in this restrictive way is to rob them of their many allusions to the redemptive history of Genesis through Deuteronomy.

With other evangelical scholars, I regard it as altogether possible—although far from proven—that at some time after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC a scholar or group of scholars collected the materials of what we today call the Former Prophets (Joshua–2 Kings) and edited them to make a unified history. But the extent to which this individual or group added to the pre-existing materials is by no means so clear. It is for this reason that, in this commentary [MH: this is from his commentary on 1 Samuel] I refrain from debating with others whether this or that passage in 1-2 Samuel is “Deuteronomistic”—that is, an editorial remark added in the final stage of composing the books.

So basically, what Hoffner is saying is, “Look, the content of 1 Samuel and the content of Joshua through 2 Kings is not entirely dependent and does not interact *only* with Deuteronomy. That would be a falsehood. Rather, its focus is much wider than that. It is the whole Pentateuch. It’s the whole Torah.” So his argument is that we shouldn’t be arguing that Deuteronomy was written wholesale later, but his view is that it’s better looked at as someone after the fact (after Joshua through 2 Kings was written or while it was being written or edited) would connect it back to Deuteronomy and other books that already existed.

So that’s Hoffner’s verdict. I’m quite comfortable with that. I think it makes sense. Harry Hoffner, by the way, for those who don’t know who he is, was a very famous world-renowned professor of Hittite who taught at the University of Chicago for his whole career. He recently passed away. But Hoffner was well-acquainted with the Deuteronomistic history and all that is said about it in the critical schools, and he’s just not buying it. He just rather thinks it makes more sense to view it as an editorial work that interacts with the entirety of the Pentateuch and not just this one book. And, again, I think that makes sense.

20:00 As far as the historical context of 1 Samuel (and we’ll just say 1 and 2 Samuel here), I am going to quote Hoffner again. He summarizes the context of what is going on when the events of the book take place.

In the order of books in the Hebrew canon, 1-2 Samuel follows immediately the book of Judges, while in the order found in the Septuagint, the book of Ruth is inserted between them. But since the setting of the book of Ruth is also in the period of the judges, both arrangements make sense chronologically.

Hoffner is saying you can go either way. He writes:

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The sequence in history was: (1) the exodus from Egypt and journey to the eastern edge of the promised land (Exodus–Deuteronomy), (2) the entrance into and conquest of the land (Joshua), (3) the period of earliest settlement (Judges/Ruth), and (4) the beginning of the monarchy (1-2 Samuel). The period of the judges is portrayed in both a negative (Judges) and positive light (Ruth). But in both books there is a sense of need for the next step: the institution of a God-honoring kingship, as God had predicted in Deuteronomy. In Judges it is expressed through the refrain “In those days there was no king in Israel: everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (e.g., Judg 17:6; 21:25). In Ruth it is expressed in the short genealogy of David found in the final chapter (Ruth 4:18–22). Both books—each in its own way—look forward to God’s chosen king to rule them. The identity of that king—left unidentified in Judges—was made specific in Ruth: David, a direct descendant of Ruth and Boaz. The historical context that follows 1-2 Samuel is as important as the one that precedes it. What began with David and was solemnized by Yahweh’s covenant with David (2 Sam 7) had a future. In the near view, this future was a gradual decline (1-2 Kings) leading to Jerusalem’s fall to the Babylonians in 586 BC, which seemingly cast into doubt Yahweh’s promise of an enduring line of Davidic kings on the throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam 7:13–16). The tension is evident: Was God’s promise not what it claimed to be—irrevocable—and David’s dynasty no different from Saul’s, who had failed before him? Or was there still a future, one that was not yet seen but nevertheless certain? The answer was partially given by the writings of the prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel), who predicted a restoration of the Davidic throne in the remote future. But their prophecies—encouraging though they were—left this future Davidic king unidentified. The final answer would come in another testament: in the announcement of the birth, life, and death of Yeshua/Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, who would sit on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:32–33; Mark 11:10; Acts 15:16–18; Rom 1:3–5; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 22:16).

So again, that’s the historical context for 1 and 2 Samuel, which is the beginning of the monarchy. We are transitioning from a time when everybody is doing right in his own eyes, and Samuel is going to be the initial figure that is going to start working the reversal of that set of circumstances.

We should also say something about the text of 1 Samuel. This obviously isn’t a Hebrew class, and even if everyone in the audience knew Hebrew, the text critical issues of 1 Samuel wouldn’t translate well at all to a podcast. I only mention the text because 1 Samuel is notorious for its textual problems. There have been whole commentaries written on the text of Samuel and its problems to deal with the differences between the Masoretic Text (the traditional Hebrew text) and the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are substantial portions of Samuel preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and by and large (but not always), they do not agree with the Masoretic Text. They agree with the Septuagint. So



there's a close agreement between the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls, not with the Masoretic Text. So sometimes this is going to help us sort of resolve a problem in what we are going to read in 1 Samuel by appeal to the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Let me just read from Joyce Baldwin's *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* on 1 Samuel in this regard. She writes:

25:00

So far as the books of Samuel are concerned, the Hebrew text had long been recognized as presenting problems. Already in 1871 Wellhausen had used the Greek of the Septuagint to reconstruct what he judged to be a more adequate Hebrew text; while Driver could write: "The Books of Samuel ... though they contain classical examples of a chaste and beautiful Hebrew prose style ... have suffered unusually from transcriptional corruption, and hence raise frequently questions of text."

The books of Samuel have been well served by finds in cave 4 at Qumran. There are three fragmentary texts of these books, all of which are important for textual study: (1) a well-preserved roll containing both books, which is known as 4QSam<sup>a</sup>; (2) a handful of very old fragments, which one can date 'scarcely later than 200 BC', are designated 4QSam<sup>b</sup>; (3) a fragmentary manuscript of 2 Samuel 14–15, which is known as 4QSam<sup>c</sup>... Studies so far have established that there is frequent agreement between 4QSam<sup>a</sup> and the Septuagint. Nevertheless, there are also disagreements, which need to be accounted for, and the suggestion has been made that each should be regarded as an independent source. Interestingly, where Samuel and Chronicles overlap [MH: catch this], the text from Qumran often preserves a text much closer to the text of Samuel used by the author of Chronicles than to the traditional text of Samuel surviving from the Middle Ages [MH: in other words, the Masoretic Text].

**So it's often different than the Masoretic Text.**

The task which faces translators of the Old Testament in deciding upon a 'source text' [MH: for 1 Samuel; that is, the version of the Hebrew from which all participating scholars will work] requires very specialized knowledge and sound judgment if all the relevant evidence is to be taken into account. The standard Hebrew text (the MT) is basic because it was itself the product of scholarly efforts to ensure that only the authoritative traditions were handed on, and every effort was made to preserve intact the text established in the early second century AD.

Let me just break in here. She is referring, of course, to the creation of what we know as the Masoretic Text, circa 100 AD. Baldwin finishes. She says:

Nevertheless, there are many places where the MT of Samuel as it stands is unintelligible, partly because the language of the Old Testament is no longer perfectly known, but also because of mistakes made during copying.

That's the end of her section. So scholars are very prone to use the Dead Sea Scroll material and the Septuagint because it turns out that what is present at Qumran is often in agreement with the Septuagint—the Hebrew text that the Septuagint translators would have been using. So the Septuagint text and the material from Qumran can be really, really helpful in understanding something going on in 1 Samuel. Again, this is why we bring this up.

But as far as theme... We should say something about theme in the book. Given the size of the book and its place within a larger literary work, there is no consensus among scholars as to whether 1 Samuel (or 1 and 2 Samuel for that matter) has a single theme unto itself. Nevertheless, what Carledge says is appropriate. I am going to quote from his commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel published by Smyth & Helwys. Carledge writes:

As every other part of the Deuteronomistic History, these stories are unashamedly tendentious. This is no “politically correct” document, but a one-sided attempt to show that God is the only true king and that obeying God is the only wise course. Those who accept God’s rule and follow his way will prosper, while those who rebuff God’s claims will fall. This is the overall theme of 1 and 2 Samuel, told in a myriad of minor plots that hammer home the authors’ primary concern: God is king; it is best to obey!

That's well put and succinctly put. So it's very worthwhile to point that out. So as we wrap up with this introduction, you are just sort of getting the lay of the land here. What is 1 Samuel? The first installment of the theological history of the monarchy. That's the simple answer. It's the first installment. It is initially focused on Samuel but will transition in focus to David and his rise to power in the wake of Saul's decline.

30:00

This note about “theological history,” (remember Richter brought this up, too) is important. 1 Samuel never pretends to be an exhaustive historical record or chronicle of either Samuel's ministry or David's rise to power. It never pretends to be that. It is selective in telling stories of these two characters (along with Saul) and judging them theologically by the covenant and curses in Deuteronomy, and again the larger context of the Torah. We will treat it as such. In each of the episodes that follow, my aim is to consistently follow a self-imposed template.

So this what I am going to try to do. When we get into a specific section of the book, the first thing we're going to talk about is, “What is the chapter or section of the book about?” In other words, why is it there? How does it propel the narrative? Secondly, we will look at, “Are there any text critical issues that

matter?” Because we have this issue with the text of 1 and 2 Samuel at Qumran in the Septuagint. If there is anything going on there that is helpful or interesting, we will be sure to point that out. Third, “What are some important literary or theological outlooks—some of the broad picture components—that you can get?” In other words, how does the material that we’re looking at in 1 Samuel connect to the wider canon? Not only just the wider overall history of Joshua through 2 Kings, but the wider overall canon. How does 1 Samuel fit into that? How does what we’re reading in 1 Samuel connect theologically to the wider Pentateuch especially—the wider Torah? We are going to be taking a look at that. Then lastly, “Are there any specific nuggets (little rabbit trails) that are of interest in the particular section of whatever our episode is about?” We’ll run down some of those rabbit trails, and that is very similar to what we’ve done in other book studies. This is not a verse-by-verse exposition. Honestly, that would be boring. What is more important is to pick out a few things of interest and comment on it. As you are reading 1 Samuel, there are going to be things that make you pause and go, “Well what’s up with that?” And those are the items that I hope to ferret out and hit—at least some of them. I mean, there’s a lot to be said in this book—a lot of things going on in every section and every chapter. So we’ll pick out a few that I think have appeal to the wider audience here of the podcast and zero in on those. So again, we’re not going to go through all of 1 Samuel verse by verse. Rather, we want to know how each section or chapter contributes to the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David followed by items and interests we encounter. That’s what we’re going to do, whether those items are textual, archeological, some kind of narrative arc that connects to the wider canon, or which are illuminated by ancient Near Eastern material. So that is going to be the way we approach 1 Samuel and I think we’re going to learn a lot. I think you’re going to get a lot out of it and enjoy it.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Yeah, looking forward to it. It’s nice to get back into the Old Testament and your sweet spot. It sounds like it’s going to be a fun ride so I’m looking forward to it.

**MH:** Yeah, well, there’s a lot in here. Trust me. There’s a lot in the book.

**TS:** Well, looking forward to it. Alright, Mike. I guess expect the first chapter of 1 Samuel next week.

**MH:** I can telegraph that. We’re going to go through chapter 1, verse 1 all the way up to chapter 2:11. So we’re going to take that chunk and do it that way.

**TS:** There you go. Alright. Everybody’s got their homework to go read that. With that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.