

## GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

**DISCUSS:** Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 136** and ask **Question #1: What's something you know you should be doing but haven't started yet?**

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG, page 137** to "Diet and Exercise: the 'magic' formula for weight loss." If the formula is that simple, why do so many of us struggle with healthy living?

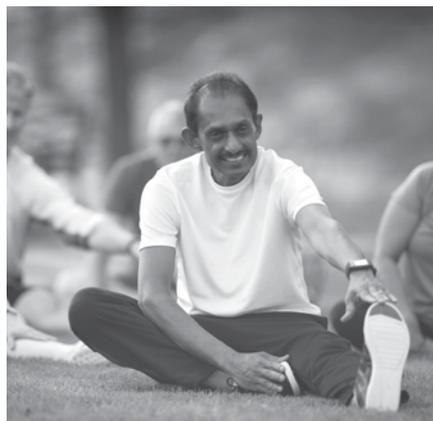
**SAY:** "Prayer is like that. We know we ought to pray, we know we should pray, but we fail to put into practice what we know we should be doing."

Reinforce **The Point** on **PSG page 137: Christ-centered living chooses prayer, not hopelessness.**

**PRAY:** Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to prompt us to pray in all circumstances so that prayer becomes second nature to us.

## SESSION 6

# HANNAH: TRUST-FILLED PRAYER



### ***The Point***

Christ-centered living chooses prayer, not hopelessness.

### ***The Bible Meets Life***

During the Thanksgiving season, our thoughts rightfully turn to the things for which we can thank God. But what about those areas of life where thanksgiving is hard?

Hannah was a woman who did not resign herself to the hardship she faced. She was despondent, but she sought God's help and trusted Him with the answer. Thanksgiving and praise can flow from our trust that, regardless of what we face, God is with us and is working on our behalf.

### ***The Passages***

1 Samuel 1:9-11,17-18,26-28; 2:1-3

### ***The Setting***

Elkanah, of the tribe of Ephraim, had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah bore no children, but Peninnah did. Elkanah made a yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh to offer sacrifices. He gave portions of the remaining sacrificial meat to Peninnah and her children, but he gave double amounts to Hannah as expressions of his love in spite of her childlessness. Peninnah derided Hannah for being childless. Hannah would be reduced to tears and would not eat. Elkanah attempted to console and reassure Hannah.

## 1 Samuel 1:9-11

9 On one occasion, Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple.

10 Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears.

11 Making a vow, she pleaded, "LORD of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."

**KEY WORD:** **Shiloh** (1:9)—The name may mean "tranquil," "secure." It was a city in the territory of Ephraim. From Joshua's time the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were located there.

### *Bring your needs to God.*

1 ► **Verse 9.** Elkanah's annual pilgrimage to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices may reflect a festival (Judges 21:19) or a family celebration. **On one occasion**, Hannah arose and walked away from the meal. In the background may have been Peninnah's taunting and Elkanah's open display of love for Hannah with generous servings at the meal (see 1:4-6). The implication is that Hannah had reached the limit of her endurance. She left the meal and went to **the Lord's temple** which signified God's presence.

**The priest Eli** was in charge of the temple (or tabernacle) at Shiloh. As noted in 1:3, Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, served as priests in the worship center. Eli was stationed by the sanctuary's **doorpost**. The word may indicate a porch in front of the curtain at the entrance to the holy place.

If *temple* refers to the tabernacle, it was composed of an outer chamber (the holy place) and an inner chamber (the most holy place or the holy of holies). Priests offered sacrifices in the holy place. The ark of the covenant was in the most holy place, and only the high priest could enter that area. He did so once a year on the Day of Atonement. Eli likely sat outside the entrance to the holy place.

**Verse 10.** Hannah may have stood outside the sanctuary or may have entered. In either case, she was deeply distraught

## STUDY THE BIBLE Samuel 1:9-11



10 minutes

**SUMMARIZE:** Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Bible Meets Life** and **The Setting** on page 140.

**LEADER PACK:** Point to **Item 8: Map Overview** to show where these events occurred



**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:9-11.

**GUIDE:** Refer members to **Key Word (PSG, p. 138)** to give details about **Shiloh**.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible**

**Commentary 1** on this page and page 142 to explain why Hannah was deeply distraught at this family celebration.

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG page 138** to the thing that caused Hannah to live with great disappointment and sadness. Ask a member of the group to read the paragraph that starts with “What is that ‘thing’ for you?”

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG page 139** to find the Lord’s remedy to help us through deep disappointment and pain: prayer.

- *Bringing our needs to God reminds us of who we are.*
- *Bringing our needs to God reminds us of who He is.*

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible**

**Commentary 2** to give more in depth explanation to the following: *Hannah ...*

- *... made a vow*
- *... asked God to take notice of her affliction*

(literally, “troubled in soul”). She prayed to God and wept uncontrollably. The language could reflect that she cried as she prayed. The cause of her deep emotional distress was her inability to have a child. Every Israelite wife wanted desperately to bear children. When they did not give birth, they bore the stigma of barrenness. Their infertility was viewed as God’s displeasure with them (or curse on them). Added to the stigma Hannah bore was Peninnah’s taunting. Doubtless, every time Hannah saw Peninnah’s children, Hannah felt the acute pain of her barrenness. ◀

**2 ▶ Verse 11.** As Hannah prayed she made **a vow**. In the Old Testament, vows were to be fulfilled (Num. 30:2) and could be conditional or unconditional. One type of vow to God has been called bargaining: If God would grant the petitioner’s request, the person would do something for God. Hannah made this kind of vow. In Hannah’s prayer, she literally “vowed a vow,” an Old Testament way to emphasize the intensity of Hannah’s plea. She addressed God as **Lord of Armies**. This name for God recognized God’s sovereignty and power. Referring to herself as God’s **servant**, Hannah prayed that God would **take notice of her affliction**. The Hebrew verb means “give attention to,” “look at with favor and interest.” Hannah’s affliction was barrenness.

Hannah’s urgent petition was that God **remember and not forget** her. For God to remember was not His calling to mind something He had forgotten. God has no lapses of memory. In Exodus 2, the Israelites were slave laborers in Egypt. In their distress they cried out to God for help; God heard their groaning; and God “remembered” his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 2:24). God had not forgotten His covenant; in His perfect timing, He acted on His covenant people’s behalf. Hannah pleaded that God not be unresponsive but act.

Hannah was specific in her prayer: “**give your servant a son.**” Hannah desperately wanted a son. In her culture, sons were especially treasured because through them their fathers’ lines were extended. Every Israelite wife’s priority was to give birth to a son—and multiple sons if possible as added blessings (and heightened status for the mother).

In accordance with Hannah’s conditional vow, if God would give her a son, she would **give him to the Lord** for lifetime service. According to Israelite law, the firstborn child belonged to God but could be redeemed by payment of money. Hannah would waive this option and dedicate her

son to God. If Elkanah was the same man listed as a Levite in 1 Chronicles 6:23-26, his son by Hannah would be a Levite. Levites were priestly helpers in the tabernacle (and later in the temple) and were required to serve between the ages of 25-50 (Num. 8:24-25). Hannah vowed her son would serve God all his life. She would do more than the law required.

Hannah's pledge that her son's hair would **never be cut** likely reflects part of the Nazirite vow. The word *Nazirite* means "consecration," "devotion," and "separation." Nazirites did not cut their hair, drink wine or other alcoholic beverages, or touch dead bodies. They could dedicate themselves to service for a specified period or for a lifetime. Hannah vowed her son would serve God all his life.

Hannah took her desperate need for a son to God. If she could not bear a child for her husband, her peers would view her as being under God's curse. She was confident God cared about her pain. Today, we can be sure God is concerned for us. The apostle Peter wrote to Christians and urged them to place their anxieties (cares) on Him because He was concerned about them (1 Pet. 5:6-7). We can have the same confidence. ◀

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## 1 Samuel 1:17-18,26-28

**17** Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him."

**18** "May your servant find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

.....  
**26** "Please, my lord," she said, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD.

**27** I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for,

**28** I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he worshiped the LORD there.

- ... *prayed that God would not forget her*
- ... *prayed for a son*
- ... *offered her son to God for lifetime service*
- ... *made a Nazirite vow*

### DISCUSS: Question #2

(PSG, p. 139): **What are some ways people deal with deep disappointment or unresolved pain?**

(Alternate: *What are some reasons people might hesitate to bring their needs to the Lord?*)

**TRANSITION:** "In the next verses we will see how God responded to Hannah's prayer."

## STUDY THE BIBLE

### 1 Samuel 1:17-18, 26-28



**10 minutes**

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 1:17-18,26-28.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use Bible

**Commentary** **4** to give explanation to the interaction between Hannah and Eli:

- *Initially Eli thought Hannah was drunk (v. 12-16)*
- *Eli pronounced his blessing on her and told her to “go in peace”*
- *His blessing included a prayer that God would grant her request*
- *Hannah asked that she would receive Eli’s favor*
- *This interaction lifted Hannah’s spirits and she was no longer despondent*

**SUMMARIZE:** Use Bible

**Commentary** **5** on this page and page 145 to explain what happened between verses 18 and 26.

- *Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son*
- *She named him Samuel, which means “name of God” or “heard of God”*
- *His name would be a constant reminder of God answering Hannah’s prayer*
- *Hannah kept her vow and dedicated Samuel to God and His service*

*God hears your prayers and answers.*

**4** ▶ **Verse 17.** As Hannah prayed, the priest Eli was watching her lips. Hannah was praying silently, but her lips were forming words. Eli assumed she was drunk, reprimanded her, and instructed her to stop drinking wine. Hannah respectfully protested she had not drunk wine or beer. She had been pouring out her pain to God. She was not wicked; she had been praying out of anguish and resentment. Her words graphically expressed her deep emotions (1:12-16).

When Eli understood Hannah’s actions, he pronounced his blessing on her. The phrase **go in peace** includes the Hebrew word *shalom*, *peace*. It was a comprehensive term, including the senses of completeness, soundness, safety, health, prosperity, and contentment. Use of the term was a way to express to someone the prayer-wish that everything work in the person’s best interests.

We are not told whether Hannah revealed the substance of her prayer to Eli, but his blessing included a prayer that **the God of Israel grant her request**. Significantly, the word *God* (Elohi) stressed His sovereign power. Eli prayed that God would exercise His power on Hannah’s behalf.

**Verse 18.** In response to Eli’s blessing and prayer that God would grant Hannah’s request, Hannah replied with a petition that she receive Eli’s **favor** or grace. That is, she asked that Eli’s blessing be fulfilled—that his intercession for her be effective. Buoyed by the blessing and prayer, Hannah returned to the family meal and began eating. Her action seems to support the view that she had left during the meal to go to the tabernacle. When she rejoined the family, she **no longer looked despondent**. Her body language did not express distress. Her prayer was yet to be answered, but she evidently was confident God had heard and would act on her behalf. ◀

**5** ▶ Hannah and Elkanah returned to their home. She and her husband engaged in marital relations, and God remembered her—He took action on her behalf. In time, Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Hannah named her son Samuel. Two interpretations of the name have been given: “name of God” or “the name is God” and “heard of God.” Hannah’s statement, “I requested him from the Lord” (v. 20), appears to be an affirmation of God’s answering her prayer rather than an explanation of the name. In any case, *Samuel* would be a constant reminder of Israel’s God and of His power exercised on His people’s behalf.

Sometime after Samuel's birth, Elkanah's family made the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. Hannah stayed home. She told Elkanah that when Samuel was weaned, she would go to the sanctuary at Shiloh and present him to the Lord for lifelong service. Samuel would be weaned when he was two or three years old. Elkanah agreed with Hannah's decision and asked that God help her keep her vow to dedicate Samuel to God's service (v. 23). Hannah stayed home and continued to nurse her son. The long period of nursing was necessary because of the lack of foods available for babies and infants.

When Hannah weaned Samuel, she took him to the sanctuary at Shiloh. She also took sacrifices to be offered. A bullock was an expensive sacrifice and likely indicates Elkanah was wealthy. Such an offering expressed the parents' thanks to God. The flour and wine accompanying the sacrifice were meal and drink offerings. Samuel's hand would have been placed on the bullock's head to demonstrate it was his substitute; its being sacrificed signified Samuel's dedication to God. When the sacrifice was complete, Elkanah and Hannah took Samuel to Eli (vv. 24-25). ◀

**6 ▶ Verse 26.** Hannah identified herself to Eli. Likely, more than three years had passed, so the priest may not have recognized her. She addressed Eli as her **lord**, which may mean "sir" as an expression of respect or "master" in recognition of his official position. The phrase **as surely as you live** was an oath strengthening the truth of what Hannah proceeded to say. She reminded Eli she was the one who came to the sanctuary and prayed. Her mention of being **beside** him does not mean she was in close proximity; she was near enough he could see her lips moving as she prayed **to the Lord**, her covenant God (see vv. 12-13).

**Verses 27-28.** Hannah focused attention on Samuel. He was the **boy** for whom she had **prayed**. God had granted her request, so she was fulfilling her vow to dedicate Samuel to God. All his life, Samuel would be consecrated to God's service. The language emphasizes God's gracious answer to Hannah's prayer. After Hannah presented Samuel to Eli and the Lord's service, **he worshiped the Lord there**. Hannah, Eli, Samuel, and Elkanah have been suggested as the person who worshiped. Elkanah probably led his family in worship. ◀

God hears His people's prayers. He gives focused attention to each of us as we approach Him. He answers us. The familiar suggested answers attributed to God are "yes," "no," and "wait a while." My faith is that in His infinite wisdom and perfect timing, God answers appropriately for our good and in the best interests of His redemptive purpose.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 6** to fill in details of what happened when Hannah returned to Shiloh to worship and fulfill her vow to dedicate Samuel to God and His service.

**DISCUSS:** **Question #3 (PSG, p. 141): When have you been blessed by an answer to prayer?**

*(Alternate: How have answered prayers shaped your understanding of God?)*

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG page 141-142** to highlight how we are to respond in those times when the Lord's answer to our prayer is "no."

- *We recognize our limited vision.*
- *We remember God's love.*
- *We trust in God's wisdom.*

**TRANSITION:** "In this season of thanksgiving it benefits us to hear Hannah's response of rejoicing and praise for God's faithfulness."

## STUDY THE BIBLE

## 1 Samuel 2:1-3



15 minutes

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 2:1-3.

**GUIDE:** Refer members to **Key Words (PSG p. 142)** to give insight into the phrase *my horn*.

**SAY:** “Hannah responded with thankful praise, praising God for His grace, power and provision. We would do well to remember we always have a reason to give thanks.”

**GUIDE:** Refer members to **PSG page 143** and recall the reasons we have to thank God:

- Remember what we deserve.
- Remember what we have.
- Remember what was paid.

**DISCUSS: Question #4 (PSG, p. 143):** What are some practical ways to cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude?

## 1 Samuel 2:1-3

**1** Hannah prayed: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted up by the LORD. My mouth boasts over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.

**2** There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.

**3** Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by him.”

**KEY WORDS: My horn (2:1)**—The word *horn* was used as a metaphor for power or strength. Behind the term may have been the image of oxen’s horns as implements of their strength.

**Respond to God with thankful praise.**

**Verse 1.** The biblical text gives no indication of when and where Hannah voiced her prayer or song. One suggestion is that she chanted it while Elkanah led in worship. It could have been her spontaneous, joyful response to God’s gift of Samuel, a hymn available at Shiloh, or other materials current in her time. Hannah’s joyful praise was a prayer in poetic form. As she had prayed for a son, so she **prayed** in response to God’s answer.

Hannah rejoiced with her whole being. In Hebrew thought, the **heart** was the center of the emotions, will, and intellect. It represented the essential person. From the core of her being and with her whole self, Hannah rejoiced **in the Lord**. Her covenant-making, covenant-keeping God was the source of her joy. This faithful **Lord** had **lifted up her horn**. He had given Hannah strength or power by giving her a son. She was not proud or arrogant but grateful. In the first two lines of her song, Hannah emphatically credited her Lord for blessing her.

Hannah used graphic imagery to express her transition from the stigma of barrenness to the exhilaration of motherhood. The phrase **my mouth boasts** presents the picture of a gaping mouth swallowing an enemy, gaining victory over an adversary. A gaping mouth also was an

expression of contempt. Evidently, Hannah had in mind Peninnah (and perhaps others) who had taunted her because she was childless. Hannah referred to her changed circumstance as God's **salvation**. In the Old Testament, the word Hannah used has the idea of deliverance. The root term means "to be broad, spacious," thus to be freed from confinement. It came to mean deliverance from oppression. Hannah's salvation was her deliverance from barrenness and victory over her detractors. The words **your salvation** stressed that God performed Hannah's rescue from her stigma; He was the source of her joy.

**Verse 2.** Hannah celebrated God's uniqueness and otherness. The word **holy** refers to God's perfect moral character and to His being separate or apart from humans. God is completely "other than" anyone else; He is not remote from us but utterly different from us. Hannah emphasized that no one else compared with the covenant God she worshiped and served. She stressed that He alone was the one, true God; no other **besides** Him existed. In addition, **no rock like ... God** existed. The term *rock* conveyed the image of a rocky wall. When it was used of God it had the sense of His defense and support of His people. As the Israelites' rock, God provided solid support in times of trouble. The name Hannah used for God stressed His sovereign power. He was more than able to provide stability for His people. Of note is that in verse 1 of her song, Hannah's use of "my" and "I" reflected her personal experience with God; in verse 2 she expanded her praise and confidence with the use of **our**. She could personally depend on God, and so could her people.

**Verse 3.** Hannah addressed wicked people or her people's enemies. She warned against boasting (speaking lofty words) and arrogance, for God knows everything. All **actions are weighed by him**. The meaning is that He balances out human actions or that His actions are balanced or just. In either approach, the emphasis is on God's activity in human experience and His ability to work reversals. He had done so in Hannah's life, and the following verses of her song enumerate other sharp reversals God brings about.

Our prayers have multiple elements. They include petition, confession, repentance, and acknowledgment of God's character traits as revealed in Jesus and in the Scriptures. Emphatic expressions in our prayers should be praise and gratitude for His presence and activity on our behalf. We give substance to our silent or vocalized praise and thanks by the quality of our living as we choose prayer over hopelessness.

**LEADER PACK:** Point to **Item**

**12: Philippians 4:6** and ask a volunteer to read this verse as a reminder to always pray.



**DISCUSS: Question #5**

**(PSG, p. 144): When difficulties make it hard to be thankful, what helps you maintain a grateful attitude?**

*(Alternate: How does thankfulness benefit us as individuals? As a community?)*

**DO:** Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity "**Thanksgiving**" on **PSG page 144**.

**LIVE IT OUT****5 minutes**

**GUIDE:** Emphasize **The Point:**  
**Christ-centered living chooses prayer, not hopelessness.**

**REVIEW:** Review **Live It Out (PSG, p. 149)**; (see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

**WRAP IT UP**

**GUIDE:** Emphasize that when prayer becomes second nature to us we follow the admonition of Scripture to “pray constantly,” without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). The God of creation invites us to cast “all [our] cares on him, because he cares about [us]” (1 Pet. 5:7).

**PRAY:** “Father, help us to pray. Thanks for the privilege to bring our cares and concerns to us. We are truly grateful for Your many blessings to us.”

**LIVE IT OUT**

The story of Hannah reminds us that we will face trouble and disappointment. But in the midst of that disappointment, there is an opportunity for trust-filled prayer. Praying with trust leads to gratitude to a God who provides not what we want, but always what we need.

- ▶ **Offer thanks.** What are three things for which you have not thanked God? Pause right now, and pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those things.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Memorize Philippians 4:6-7 as a reminder to take your needs to God and trust His answer.
- ▶ **Journal.** Begin a gratitude journal. Spend a few moments each day writing specific prayers of gratitude. Watch how your heart begins to change.



BIBLICAL  
**ILLUSTRATOR**



Silver plate representing a scene from Israel's history; shown, Samuel anointing David.

The story of Samuel starts with his parents' example of faithfulness and prayer. Samuel's father, Elkanah, was a faithful worshiper of God. He fulfilled his obligations to God as is evidenced in his pattern of faithful sacrifices before the Lord. Samuel's mother, Hannah, was also godly.

Hannah's prayer to God included two vows. First, she vowed that should God give her a son, she would give him to the Lord all his life. The second vow was that "no razor shall come upon his head" (v. 11), the Nazirite vow.

The Hebrew word for "Nazirite" denotes the idea of separation. The significance of the vow was that the Nazirite was separated or dedicated to God. A Nazirite made a commitment of separation from the ordinary life. The Nazirite led a life of consecrated service and obedience to God. Hannah's vow that he would be a Nazirite from birth points to her intention to dedicate him to God for all his life.

While still a young man, God began to speak to Israel through Samuel (3:19–4:1). The statement, "the Lord was with him," indicates God blessed Samuel's life and his work and ministry as a prophet. God used Samuel because of his faithfulness and obedience. The Lord's faithfully used Samuel and Samuel was faithful to God (1 Sam. 3:19). Because he faithfully delivered God's words, Samuel's reputation as a genuine prophet spread throughout all Israel, "For the first time since Moses, Israel had a national prophet."

The excerpt above is from the article "Samuel: A Biography" (Fall 2008), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*You can call out to God in prayer with your deepest needs and He hears. One of your deepest needs is to receive forgiveness of your sins.*

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



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