



SESSION 6

HANNAH: TRUST-FILLED PRAYER

The Point

Christ-centered living chooses prayer, not hopelessness.

The Passage

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

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 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.

What does the Bible say?

Shiloh (1:9)—This was a city in the territory of Ephraim. From Joshua's time the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were located there.

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.

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

^{1:9} **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."**

^{1:17} **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.**

^{1:26} **"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.**

^{2:1} **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."**

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 107 of the PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“What’s something you know you should be doing but haven’t started?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 108):

Diet and exercise. That remains the “magic” formula (that’s not so magic) for weight loss. Of course, other medical reasons might explain why someone is

overweight, but for the vast majority of us, if we want to drop a few pounds, it comes down to diet and exercise. Prayer is like that. We know we ought to pray; we know we need to pray. But despite all the exhortations and commands, we often fail to put into practice what we know we should be doing.

SAY: “For the Christian, prayer must become second nature to us because the alternative to choosing a consistent and ongoing prayer life is choosing, by default, to live with a sense of hopelessness.”

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Display the following: a picture of a megaphone, an email printed off, a grocery list, and a phone ready to call 911. Explain that as Christ-followers, we’re given complete access to God in prayer. If not given priority, our prayer lives can begin to resemble one of these items. Share the description given to each in the activity “Prayer Practices” on PSG page 113. In today’s session, we encounter Hannah who teaches us what a genuine prayer life looks like.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** on page 108 of the PSG: **“Christ-centered living chooses prayer, not hopelessness.”**

PRAY: Transition into the discussion with prayer. Thank God for His attentiveness to our needs and His power to act on behalf of His people.

TIP: Group members will grasp the lesson more if they are the ones sharing key points. Always give opportunities for members to comment or share their understanding of the important principles you are learning about.

PACK POSTER:

Pack Item #8

“People and Places” poster

Pack Item #12

“Philippians 4:6” poster

PLAYLIST PICK:

“Oh My Soul”

By Casting Crowns

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

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."



READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Samuel 1:9-11.

LEADER PACK: Bring your group's attention to **Pack Item #8**, "People and Places" poster and identify the location of Shiloh.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 109): In this passage, we are introduced to a man named Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah.

- » Since the Israelites considered motherhood a mark of God's blessing, all was well for Peninnah because she had children (1 Samuel 1:2).
- » Hannah was childless, and just as children were seen as a mark of God's blessing, childlessness was viewed as evidence that God was displeased with a family. This was the great disappointment and sadness for Hannah.

DISCUSS: Question 2 on page 109 of the PSG: "What are some ways people deal with deep disappointment or unresolved pain?"

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGES 109-110): In her pain and disappointment, Hannah prayed—and so can we. When we go to God with our needs, we are reminded of two key truths.

1. **Bringing our needs to God reminds us of who we are.** Asking for help is an acknowledgment of our own inability and God's unmatched ability.
2. **Bringing our needs to God reminds us of who He is.** When we come to God in prayer, we are reminded that He is exalted above all others and He is the true and rightful King whom we serve. This mighty God is also fatherly.

DISCUSS: Question 3 on page 110 of the PSG: "What have you been taught about the nature and purpose of prayer?"

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What's at stake when we choose not to bring our needs to God?

1 Samuel 1:9-11 Commentary

Bring your needs to God. Verses 9-10: Elkanah's annual pilgrimage to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices may reflect the yearly festival mentioned in Judges 21:19 or a private, family celebration. On one occasion, Hannah ("grace") 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.

Hannah went to "the LORD's temple." The reference could be to the tabernacle. The priest Eli was in charge of the temple (or tabernacle) at Shiloh. Eli was stationed by (or in front of) the sanctuary's doorpost. Hannah may have stood outside the sanctuary or may have entered. In either case, she was deeply distraught (literally, "troubled in soul"). 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.

Verse 11: As Hannah prayed she made a vow, 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 could refer to God's being Commander of Israel's armies, the heavenly bodies, or angels. In any case, the name recognized God's sovereignty and power. Referring to herself as God's servant, Hannah prayed God would "take notice of" her affliction. The Hebrew verb means "give attention to," "look at with favor and interest." Hannah's affliction (distress, frustration) was barrenness. Hannah's urgent petition was that God "remember and not forget" her. God has no lapses of memory. The word has the idea of taking action. Hannah pleaded that God not be unresponsive but act.

Hannah was specific: "give your servant a son." 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. 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.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

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.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Samuel 1:17-18,26-28.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGES 110-111): Hannah made her request known to God and trusted Him to answer her.

- » Before she prayed, she was characterized by a deep sense of disappointment and sadness. We see immediately after this an entirely different spirit from Hannah. Through prayer, her burden was lifted.
- » The Lord was faithful to answer her prayer. Hannah conceived a child and named him Samuel. The name itself is an acknowledgment that this boy was an answer to prayer since it is a wordplay meaning, "requested from God" or "heard by God."
- » For the rest of his life, Samuel would hear, over and over again, that his very existence was evidence of a God who hears and answers His people. Hannah would live the rest of her life confidently knowing that God does indeed listen and is moved when His people pray.
- » Because the boy was an answer to prayer, straight from God, Hannah knew that the life of her son ultimately belonged to the Lord; consequently, she entrusted this precious gift back to Him.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How have God's responses to your prayers shaped your understanding of Him?

DISCUSS: Question 4 on page 111 of the PSG: **"When have you been blessed by an answered prayer?"** (Note: Keep in mind God may answer a prayer request with a 'No' or 'Wait,' which may not feel like a blessing at the time, but can be recognized as one later on.)

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

God hears your prayers and answers. Verse 17: As Hannah prayed for a son, the priest Eli was watching. Hannah was praying silently, but her lips were forming words. Eli assumed she was drunk. Hannah respectfully protested she had not drunk wine or beer. She had been pouring out her pain to God, praying out of anguish and resentment (1:12-16). When Eli understood Hannah's actions, he pronounced his blessing on her. "Go in peace" includes the Hebrew word *shalom*, "peace," which Israelites used in greeting and parting. It was a comprehensive term, including the senses of completeness, soundness, safety, health, prosperity, and contentment. Use of the term expressed 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.

Verse 18: In response to Eli's blessing and prayer, 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. She "no longer looked despondent." Her prayer was yet to be answered, but she evidently was confident God had heard it.

On the morning after Hannah's experience, she and Elkanah returned home. They 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. According to Israelite custom, the mother usually named her children, although the father could do so. Hannah named her son Samuel, "name of God" or "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. When Hannah weaned Samuel, she took him to the sanctuary at Shiloh. When the annual sacrifice was complete, Elkanah and Hannah took Samuel to Eli (vv. 24-25).

Verses 26-28: 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 in recognition of his official position. She reminded Eli she was the one who came to the sanctuary and prayed in his presence. Hannah focused attention on Samuel. She identified him as 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 verses' language emphasizes God's gracious answer to Hannah's prayer. After Hannah presented Samuel to Eli and the God'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.



10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

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."*

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Samuel 2:1-3.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGES 111-112): Hannah responded to God's intervention with thankful praise. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, gratitude springs up. By God's grace, we can cultivate hearts that are no longer entitled nor covetous, but burn with praise for the Lamb that was slain.

DISCUSS: Question 5 on page 112 of the PSG: **"What are some practical ways to cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude?"**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Invite a church member or group member to share a brief testimony about how they prioritize prayer so that it's second nature. Meet up in advance to help them shape this testimony. Ask them to share practical tips as well as what they've learned from personal experience.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does thankfulness benefit us as individuals? As a community?

DO: Instruct group members to complete the activity on page 113 on their own. If time allows, invite volunteers to share their responses aloud.

PRAYER PRACTICES:

- » Of the options below, which best describes your prayer life? Check one.
 - ☐ A megaphone. *I use this a lot but never hear anyone talking back.*
 - ☐ Email. *My prayers are occasional and generic.*
 - ☐ Grocery list. *Here's what I need.*
 - ☐ A coffee shop. *It can be described as: frequent, conversational, enjoyable, and needed.*
 - ☐ 911. *It's only implemented when things get rough.*
- » What steps can you take to strengthen and prioritize your prayer life?

1 Samuel 2:1-3 Commentary

Respond to God with thankful praise. Verse 1: The biblical text gives no indication of when and where Hannah voiced her prayer or song. 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. He had given Hannah strength or power by giving her a son.

Hannah emphatically credited God for blessing her. Hannah used graphic imagery to express her transition from the stigma of barrenness to the exhilaration of motherhood. 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.

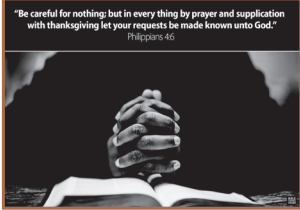
Verse 3: Hannah addressed wicked people or her people's enemies. She warned against boasting (speaking lofty words) and arrogance, for God knows everything. All actions are "weighed by him." The meaning is that He balances out human actions or that His actions are balanced or just. In either approach, 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.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

Notes



LEADER PACK: Bring your group's attention to **Pack Item #12**, "Philippians 4:6" poster, to reinforce the Point.

SAY: "As Christ-followers, we are not without hope. We're offered the greatest privilege—unlimited access to God in prayer."

GUIDE: Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 114 of the PSG.



- » **Make time.** To be sure you are creating space for prayer, assess your current prayer habits. Then, increase the time you spend in prayer by 5 to 10 minutes. Make it your goal to pray throughout the day and not just at set times.
- » **Persist.** Whatever your "thing" is that you've been petitioning God for, keep at it. Continue to present your request to God, not for the sake of checking the task off an invisible "to do" list, but for the needed reminder that God is all-powerful and that He desires to hear from His people.
- » **Pray collectively.** As a group, identify a need within your group, your church, or your community. Commit to pray for this need for the next 30 days, both individually and corporately. Along the way, pay attention to what God teaches you about Himself, prayer, and the need for which you are praying.

Wrap It Up

SAY: "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.**"

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

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