

Group Study Guide

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

A Portrait of a Godly Mother

1 Samuel 1:1-28 and 2:1-10

May 13th, 2018

Main Point

On this day we honor godly mothers by taking a look at a biblical example of godly motherhood.

Getting Started

Today we will study the story of Hannah, Samuel's mother in 1 Samuel chapter one in honor of Mother's Day. Hannah's prayer shows us that all we have and receive is from God. Hannah might have had many excuses for being a possessive mother. But when God answered her prayer, she followed through on her promise to dedicate Samuel to God's service. Hannah entrusted her son to Eli the priest as promised. She discovered that the greatest joy in having a child is to give that child fully and freely back to God. She entered motherhood prepared to do what all mothers must eventually do – let go of their children. That's one of the bravest things a mom can do. Spend some time in your group today praying for mothers – moms who attend your group, as well as your own wives and mothers. Ask God to fill them with the courage to entrust their children to God, no matter how old their kids are.

Observation

Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 1:1-19.

At the beginning of 1 Samuel, we read about Hannah, Samuel's mother, a woman who found herself in a desperate situation: she was childless (1:2). In Old Testament times, a woman's primary role in life was bearing children for her husband. Infertility equaled failure in other people's eyes. As if infertility weren't bad enough, Hannah was also taunted by her husband's other wife Peninnah (vv. 4-7). (It's important to note that polygamy was never God's plan for marriage but had become culturally acceptable in Old Testament times.) Hannah's despair over the entire situation led her soul to become bitter, or "deeply hurt" (v. 10).

How does this story begin? Who is Elkanah? Who were his two wives? Where did Elkanah go each year and for what reason? Who is Eli?

Why did Elkanah give double portions of food to his wife, Hannah, at the annual feasts?

Why did Peninnah provoke Hannah? How did Hannah take her taunting?

How does the list of Elkanah's ancestry (v. 1) underscore Hannah's plight? Why is a child so dear to her?

Instead of camping in her bitterness and blaming God, Hannah voiced an honest, vulnerable prayer to Him (v. 11). She pled with God to give her a son and, in return, she would give him back to God for His service. Before God answered her prayer, Hannah dedicated her life and her child's life to God. Her prayers acknowledged that if she were to have a child, it would be in God's control. Hannah wanted a child not for her needs, but for God's glory.

Read verse 11 again. What stands out to you about the details of Hannah's prayer?

What attributes of God does she specifically mention? What did Hannah intend for her son by her vow? What does this reveal about her?

Why is it significant that Hannah surrendered her future child to lifetime service to God? As a parent, what sacrifices would this require of her? Why would it be worth it?

As she prayed, Hannah captured some of God's attributes, including His greatness and sovereignty. Then she asked God to look upon her sorrow. Finally, she told God that she wasn't asking for a child to benefit her, but for ministry in the temple as a Nazarite (lay priest). She offered her not-yet-conceived child to God for His purposes in the world. As we'll see in the next set of verses, God chose to answer her prayer, and she became the mother of Samuel, the last judge and first prophet in Israel. Samuel bore the responsibility of anointing David as king, and he is listed among the greats of the faith in Hebrews 11:32.

Have someone read verse 18 again. How does this description of Hannah compare to verse 10?

Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 1:20-28.

Confidence in God doesn't mean we're free from struggle. It means that we can live in hope and anticipation of how God will work in us. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him back to Eli the priest to fulfill her promise to God. He was probably around 3 years old at that time. Faithfulness and obedience to God meant Hannah had to give back to Him what she wanted most—her child.

Hannah's confidence in God not only gave her hope in her desperate situation, but also created in her a desire to sacrifice to God. Her prayer was answered, and she gave the answer to her prayer back to God.

How did Hannah honor the Lord by naming her son Samuel?

How long did Hannah keep Samuel home from the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh?

What did Hannah do once she weaned Samuel?

How did Hannah worship the Lord at Shiloh?

To whom did she present her child? How did she introduce herself to the priest in verse 26?

Reread verse 28. What does Hannah mean by saying she lent Samuel to the Lord? For how long did she lend him to the Lord? What did that mean for Hannah? For Samuel?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does Hannah exhibit the qualities of a godly mother in this passage? Consider her words and actions from before conception to when she dedicated Samuel to the Lord.

How do you tend to respond to God when He seems to say no to your prayers?

Hannah asked God to look upon her sorrow, and He did. What does it mean to you that the Creator of the universe cares about you enough to answer your prayers?

What avenues do we sometimes take instead of taking our heartbreak and desperation to the Lord? Why turn to God first?

How did Hannah view the things God gave her? Is this the same view you have? Why or why not?

What does lifelong service to God (v. 28) look like in your life? If you are a parent, is this an honest desire you have for your children?

What things or people in your life are most indispensable to you? Can you give them back to God as Hannah did? What would that require of you?

Think about the gifts you give to God. Do they cost you little or are they true sacrifices? Why is sacrifice important in our relationship with God?

Prayer

Read Hannah's song in I Samuel 2:1-10. Hannah's song is really a prayer of praise, or a hymn, to the God who hears our prayers. In this passage, Hannah extols God's greatness, his power, his faithfulness and his holiness. Many of the themes of her

prayer are found in the Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46-56). Take some time in your group to praise God for who He is and how He has shown Himself faithful in your life recently. Share stories of God's faithfulness with others.

Commentary

1:1. The exact location of Ramathaim-zophim is not known, but it is distinct from Ramah, located in the tribal territory of Benjamin (v. 19). It probably designates Elkanah's ancestral home. The name Elkanah means "God has acquired." Ephraimite denotes Elkanah's place of residence, not his tribal background, which was that of Levi (1Ch 6:25-28).

1:2. The name Hannah means "grace." She was childless, a condition often viewed with disfavor or even anguish (Gen 16:4-5; 30:1; Lk 1:24-25).

1:3. Shiloh was centrally located about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. It was the place from which Joshua divided the land among the tribes (Jos 18:1-10).

1:5. The "double portion" was the amount of the inheritance the firstborn received (Dt 21:17). Here it probably denotes Elkanah's special love for Hannah. The words "the Lord had kept her from conceiving" is literally, "Yahweh had closed her womb" (cp. v. 6).

1:6. The rivalry between Hannah and Peninnah finds parallels in the accounts of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16:4-5) and Leah and Rachel (Gen 30:14-16).

1:10. The words "deeply hurt" can be more literally rendered "bitter of soul," using the same Hebrew word that Naomi used (mara; Ru 1:20).

1:11. If God would give Hannah a son, she vowed to give him back to God according to the law of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-21).

1:12-14. Eli misread Hannah's anguish as drunkenness and scolded her for her apparent disregard of the holy place.

1:15-16. Hannah immediately clarified the situation with Eli. The "depth" (lit "abundance") of Hannah's anguish and resentment over her situation had come to the surface.

1:18. The Hebrew word for favor with which Hannah replied was a shortened form of her own name.

1:19. Ramah lay along the major north-south highway five miles north of Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin. The tender words "the Lord remembered her" reminds the reader that ultimately it is God who brings new life within the womb. In the OT, to "remember" means not simply to think about someone but to act on their behalf. 1:20.

The name Samuel may be a wordplay meaning “requested from God.” A second possibility is the meaning “heard by God.”

1:21. The expression “annual sacrifice” literally means “sacrifice of the days” and probably designates one of the three required festivals—Passover, the Festival of Weeks, or the Festival of Booths (Dt 16:16). The word “vow” may denote a separate vow that Elkanah had made, or perhaps it designates Hannah’s vow that Elkanah then shared with her when he heard of it (Num 30:10-15).

1:22. The apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees (2 Macc 7:27) suggests Israelite children were weaned at around age three, a custom not unusual in societies where homes lacked running water and where the purity of drinking water was difficult to maintain.

1:23. The Hebrew verb translated “confirm” literally means “cause to stand.” Elkanah wanted God’s blessing to remain on the young boy Samuel.

1:24. The Masoretic Text, overall the most reliable Hebrew manuscript tradition, reads “three bulls” here. The HCSB adopted “three-year-old bull” because of the reference to a single bull in verse 25 and because of the testimony of other early manuscripts. If the Masoretic Text is correct, however, it may be that the one bull constituted Elkanah’s sacrifice of thanksgiving for Samuel’s birth, while the other two were part of his usual sacrifice, and hence were not mentioned in verse 25.

1:26-27. Hannah thought it important to testify to Eli, Israel’s high priest, how God had answered her prayer.

1:28. The Hebrew words translated “give” and “given” are related to the Hebrew word for “requested,” which also has to do with the meaning of Samuel’s name (v. 20). They literally mean “to give over” or “to grant” what was requested. Hannah had received the son she requested; she now grants him to the Lord for His service.