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1 Samuel 1

“Hannah’s Hope”

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The book of **1 Samuel** tells the story of three main characters: Samuel, Saul, and David, respectively. The writer is unknown, however, some Bible scholars believe Samuel to be the author. One distinction between the Hebrew Bible and our Bible is that **1 Samuel** and **2 Samuel** are not divided but one book called the book of Samuel. The name Samuel in Hebrew is Shmu’el (nickname would have been Shmulik), which means, “God hears.” His parents were Elkanah and Hannah.

The book was written circa 1100BC, which was a transitional time in Israel when they moved from judges to kings, and a transitional leader was needed, which is where Samuel comes in. He operated as one of the last of the judges, and one of the first of the prophets. He also, at times, served in the role of a priest, being a Levite of the tribe of Levi. Samuel ranks with Moses, not only in Jewish literature, but in the Bible, too: **Jeremiah 15:1** - *“Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people”* and **Psalms 99:6** - *“Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name.”*

In this study, we’ll look at how the Lord wants us to be people of prayer, perseverance, and patience, as we wait for him to move, and *“in the course of time”* we see his revealed will for our lives.

Historical Background

1. The story begins before Samuel’s birth, and we learn about how God helped his mother conceive after many years of infertility.
2. Elkanah lived in the town of Ramathaim, which is thought to have been located about four or five miles northwest of Jerusalem.

3. He was a devout man, according to [1 Samuel 1:3](#), which says, *“Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh...”*
 - a. Shiloh was about 15 miles north of Ramathaim, and it was the place where the Tabernacle was located before the Temple was built.
4. He had two wives: Peninnah and Hannah.
 - a. It bears repeating that we read many times in the Old Testament about polygamy, which was man’s practice, but never God’s preference.
 - b. As Pastor Gary said, sometimes we need to read the Bible like a newspaper article that reports crimes, and understand that not everything recorded is recommended.
 - c. The inference is that he and Hannah were not able to have children, so he married Peninnah so he could have children by her.
5. According to [1 Samuel 1:4–5](#), Elkanah’s real love was for Hannah.
 - a. *“Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her...”*
6. Even though he loved Hannah, he didn’t have a full understanding of the pain she felt concerning her infertility.
 - a. [1 Samuel 1:8](#) - *“Elkanah her husband would say to her, ‘Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?’ ”*
 - b. Hannah was not the first woman mentioned in the Bible who wrestled with infertility, however, she is the first woman whose heart was opened up for us to see some of the emotional and spiritual pain associated with infertility.
 - i. A list of other women mentioned in the Bible includes: Sara (Abraham); Rachel (Jacob); Manoah’s wife (Mother of Samson) and Elizabeth (Zechariah).
7. There’s no doubt that Hannah was a remarkable woman, who not only modeled what to do in response to the painful matter of infertility, but how to manage life’s deep disappointments, as well as what to do when facing difficult personal struggles.

Prayer

8. Hannah was a woman of prayer.¹

¹ References to Hannah praying include: [1 Samuel 1:10, 12, 13, 16, 26–27](#) and [2 Samuel 2:1](#).

9. She was committed to pray, not just because she wanted a child, though that was obviously part of it, but also because she knew prayer was the only remedy to a hurting heart.
10. Hannah described herself as being:
 - a. A woman of *"bitterness of soul"* - [1 Samuel 1:10](#)
 - b. A woman of *"misery"* - [1 Samuel 1:11](#)
 - c. A woman *"who [was] deeply troubled"* - [1 Samuel 1:15](#)
 - d. A woman *"in great anguish and grief"* - [1 Samuel 1:16](#)
11. Hannah knew that the only one who can heal was God, not her husband, Elkanah, Eli the priest, and certainly no neighbor, friend, or any other person in the world.
12. There isn't anything wrong with sharing our pain and heartache with someone like a spouse, pastor, counselor, or friend, because the Bible encourages it.
 - a. [Galatians 6:2](#) - *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*
 - b. [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#) - *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."*
13. All of the encouragement, comfort and counsel of another human being will never substitute for the ministry the Holy Spirit does in our hearts through prayer.

Perseverance

14. Hannah continued to seek the Lord and trust him despite the opposition or misunderstanding of others.
 - a. Elkanah questioned her and let it be known to Hannah that he thought he was better than ten sons!
 - b. Peninnah provoked Hannah.
 - i. [1 Samuel 1:6-7](#) - *"And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival [Peninnah] kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat."*
 - ii. The Hebrew meaning of Peninnah is "pearl," and what a gem she was!
 - iii. Peninnah was one of the first "trash talkers" in the Bible, and she mocked Hannah in her pain.

15. Hannah's name in Hebrew means, "Grace," and that's just the kind of person she was, and it's worth noting that we never read of her retaliating.
16. Not only did her husband question her and her rival provoked her, she was also accused of being drunk by her "pastor"!
 - a. **1 Samuel 1:12-16** - *"As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, 'How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.' 'Not so, my lord,' Hannah replied, 'I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.' "*
17. Hannah was unmoved and she wasn't deterred by all of the negativity expressed by others, instead she was determined to remain hopeful and prayerful, and to press on no matter what anyone else thought.
18. Like Hannah, when people question, provoke, or misjudge us, we must persevere and keep following after the Lord no matter what anyone else thinks!

Patience

19. **1 Samuel 1:19-20** - *"Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the Lord for him.' "*
 - a. Notice the Bible says, *"in the course of time,"* not immediately or soon thereafter, but *"in the course of time."*
 - b. **Psalm 27:14** - *"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."*
 - c. **Psalm 130:5** - *"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope."*
20. God is never late and he's never in a rush; he's always on time!
21. God's delay is often for his display, and greater glory comes *"in the course of time."*

22. No matter how hard it was to pray, persevere, and be patient, it must have been even harder for her to fulfill the promise she made to God!
- a. **1 Samuel 1:11** - *“And she made a vow, saying, ‘O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.’ ”*
23. When Samuel was about three years old, Hannah took his little hand in hers and she walked him to the Tabernacle and gave him over to Eli, the priest, to be raised in the House of God so that he might grow up in the service of God.
- a. **1 Samuel 1:24-28** - *“After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, ‘As surely as you live, my lord [the priest], I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.’ And she worshiped the Lord there.”*
 - b. **1 Samuel 2:19** tells us that every year Hannah and Elkanah would visit him and take him a robe.
24. When we consider how Hannah must have felt the day she knelt down and kissed her little boy’s cheeks and hugged his little frame and said, “Goodbye,” we have to agree with Pastor Gary when he said he believed the hardest thing Hannah ever did was to surrender Samuel to God.
25. The hardest thing we will ever have to do is to “surrender our Samuel” the Lord by saying:
- a. Lord, my children belong to you.
 - b. Lord, my marriage belongs to you.
 - c. Lord, my desire to be in a relationship belongs to you.
 - d. Lord, my career belongs to you.
 - e. Lord, my money belongs to you.
 - f. Lord, my future belongs to you.
 - g. Lord, my life belongs to you.
26. Everything we have comes from the hand of God, and everything we are is because of the grace of God.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [1 Samuel 1:1-20](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Spend time talking about what a remarkable woman Hannah was, especially in light of her response to infertility, and how she dealt with life's disappointments and difficult personal struggles.
4. How has the Lord brought comfort to you during times of prayer?
5. Has it been your experience that prayer has oftentimes been the only remedy for your hurting heart?
6. Read and discuss [Galatians 6:2](#) and [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#).
 - a. Share examples of times when you received the blessing of having others help you carry your burdens.
7. Spend time talking about the ways the Lord has helped you persevere through difficult situations.
8. Read and discuss [1 Samuel 1:19-20](#), and focus on the need for patience as you wait for God to move "*in the course of time.*"
 - a. How have you experienced the fact that God's delay was for his display and greater glory?
9. Read and discuss [Psalm 27:14](#) and [Psalm 130:5](#).
10. How have you been able to "surrender your Samuel(s)" to the Lord? (See #25 above)
11. Distribute the lyrics to the people in your group and sing the hymn *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*.
 - a. Spend time talking about the ways the lyrics minister to each person in your group.
12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that God is never late or in a rush, but he's always on time; remember to practice the "3 P's" of prayer, perseverance, and patience.

13. NOTE: K-Group leaders need to be sensitive to the men and women in their group who may be dealing with the pain of infertility. Please prayerfully consider whether or not your K-Group meeting is the right time to allow people in the group to share their story of how the Lord gave them the blessing of children or minister to those who have not been able to have children.