

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH
DAVID-THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART
THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL
1 SAMUEL 1:1-28
07/16/2017



MAIN POINT

Humble prayer fosters dependence on God and submission to His will.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What has brought you the most joy in the past few years? The most grief? What brought relief from your grief?

When things go wrong, to whom do you immediately turn? What is your initial attitude?

What do you think it means to depend on God through prayer?

It is easy for Christians to forsake their dependence on God. Do we not believe God can work as He did in the days of Scripture? When we submit to God's Will and follow His lead, no person or society can stop God's church. As believers, we need a disposition of humble communication with God for spiritual transformation.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

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

What responses did Hannah's childlessness evoke in her? In Elkanah? In Peninnah?

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

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.

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?

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.

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?

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.

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?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

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

What do you find most difficult about letting go and relying on God through prayer?

Why do difficult times make us aware of our need for God? Share about a time when you've seen this awareness in your life.

How can you use prayer to remind you of God's past faithfulness, grace, and favor in your life?

PRAY

Come together as a group in prayer, acknowledging God's sovereignty. Give your group members the opportunity to spend quiet time in prayer, asking God to meet them in their most desperate situations.

COMMENTARY

1 SAMUEL 1:1-28

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" remind 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.