

Unit I: Faithful Witnesses Testify to God's Promises

Wishing and Hoping and Praying

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 49:13-17

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:1-11, 18-19; 3:1-18

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 1:9-20, 25

KEY VERSE

Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD. (1 Samuel 1:20, KJV)

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So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him." (1 Samuel 1:20, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Recognize Hannah's faithful witness through her prayerful longing.
- Experience heartfelt vows as honest expressions of witness to God.
- Cultivate a rich prayer life as an element of living a faithful witness before God.

*Key Terms

Heart (verse 13)—Hebrew: *leb* (labe): inner mind, mind, will, heart.

Mouth (verse 12)—Hebrew: *peh* (peh): organ of speech and of eating and drinking.

Prayed (verse 10)—Hebrew: *palal* (paw-lal'): to intervene; interpose.

Temple (verse 9)—Hebrew: *bekal* (kay-kawl'): a palace; a large public building; "the Lord's house" (NIV).

Vow (verse 11)—Hebrew: *neder* (neh'-der): refers to a solemn promise made to God.

Wept (verse 10)—Hebrew: *bakah* (baw-kaw'): to bewail; to cry, often in the context of mourning, distress, or deep emotional expression; "weeping" (NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

First Samuel is the ninth book of the Old Testament, bridging the history of the nation of Israel from the chaotic era of tribal leadership to a centralized monarchy under human kings, particularly Saul and David. The author of the book is unknown, though possible authors include Samuel, Israel's last judge, as well as Nathan and Gad. Initially, 1 and 2 Samuel comprised a single book; however, they were separated by the translators of the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), covering about one hundred years of Israel's history in Canaan. Structurally, 1 Samuel can be divided into three distinct sections: Samuel's ministry (chapters 1–7), Saul's reign and rejection (chapters 8–15), and David's rise and Saul's decline (chapters 16–31). Several essential theological themes are embedded in 1 Samuel, including God as the ultimate ruler over humanity, the power of prayer and authentic faith, the significance of the heart in a relationship with God, and worship as an act of obedience to and reverence for God. The immediate biblical context for this lesson is 1 Samuel 1, which begins with Samuel's miraculous birth in response to his mother, Hannah's, earnest prayer.

Introduction

Prayer is a vital spiritual discipline rooted in Christ's completed work of redemption. In other words, communicating with God through this essential practice is only possible because of His death, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, one primary reason believers pray is to worship God for this privilege, going beyond merely asking for His help when facing challenges in circumstances, situations, and self-made dilemmas. Nonetheless, prayer remains the primary means of communicating with God, expressing faith in Him, and fostering spiritual growth. In his book *Spiritual Disciplines in the Christian Life* (NavPress, 2014), Donald S. Whitney states that prayer ranks second only to the intake of God's Word. Despite the importance of this vital discipline as a privilege, responsibility, and means of maintaining a close relationship with God, Whitney reports that statistics and experience show that a significant percentage of professing Christians spend very little time in ongoing prayer. However, prayer is firmly rooted in Scripture and filled with numerous examples throughout its content, guiding us in how to deepen our communication with God effectively. Among the many examples of effective prayers in the Bible is Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1:9-20. Desperately desiring a child and moved by deep anguish and unwavering faith, Hannah turned to God in fervent prayer, prom-

ising to dedicate her child to God's service if He granted her request. Her prayer was free of selfishness and self-serving motives, focusing on pleasing God and fulfilling His purposes. As a result, her prayer was answered in a way that exceeded her expectations. Thus, Hannah's prayer highlights that effective prayer depends more on the attitude of the person praying than on the method used.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Wishing Becomes Faith-filled Hope (1 Samuel 1:9-18)

KJV

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

NIV

9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house.

10 In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly.

11 And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on 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."

12 As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.

13 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk

14 and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

15 "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.

16 "Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

18 She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

First Samuel opens with the introduction of a “certain man” named Elkanah, who had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. The narrative quickly centers on Hannah, whose inability to conceive placed her under cultural shame, often viewed as a sign of divine disfavor. In accordance with the Mosaic Law, all Hebrew males were required to appear before the Lord at the tabernacle for three annual religious festivals. Elkanah faithfully fulfilled this obligation, bringing his family with him each time. During one of these sacred visits, grieved by her barrenness and provoked by Peninnah’s relentless, cruel taunts, Hannah broke down in anguished prayer before the Lord. She poured out her soul, pleading for a son and vowing to dedicate him to God for lifelong service if He granted her request (verses 9–11). As she silently petitioned the Lord, Eli, the high priest, observed her lips moving and assumed she was intoxicated (verses 12–14). Upon Hannah’s heartfelt explanation, Eli recognized the depth of her sorrow and the sincerity of her petition. In response, he blessed her with the assurance that God would grant what she had asked of Him (verses 15–17). Strengthened by Eli’s affirmation and her unwavering confidence in God’s ability to respond, Hannah rejoined her family with calm and faith-filled hope. Her countenance, once marked by despair, was now transformed by the assurance that the Lord had heard her (verse 18). Because Hannah surrendered her heart to God, yielded completely to His will, and trusted His purposes, her despair was transformed into hope, teaching that the transition from “wishing” to “faith-filled hope” rests on God’s power and integrity to replace sorrow with confident expectation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can believers imitate Hannah’s example of turning to prayer during difficult circumstances, deep distress, or disappointment?

Faith-filled Hope Becomes Answered Prayer

(1 Samuel 1:19-20, 25)

KJV

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

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25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

NIV

19 Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.

20 So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

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25 When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli.

After worshipping before the Lord and likely participating in the daily morning sacrifice at the temple the next day, Elkanah and his family returned home. Knowing Eli’s affirmation regarding Hannah’s request, Elkanah made love to his wife, Hannah. Ultimately, God remembered her—acting on her behalf—she conceived, gave birth to a son, and named him Samuel (verses 19-20). Hannah called her son Samuel because she had asked the Lord for him, and He had granted her request, further recognizing His sovereign role in fulfilling her heart’s desire. The name Samuel means “heard by God,” symbolizing that He not only listened to her but also acted on her behalf, transforming Hannah’s faith-filled hope into an answered prayer. God’s response to Hannah’s prayer shows that those who trust in Him can expect Him to respond to their sincere petitions according to His timing if they align with His will and purpose. Hannah’s commitment to her vow is revealed in verse 25—she brings Samuel to the temple to dedicate him to a life of service to the Lord and leaves him with Eli, foreshadowing his future role as Israel’s prophet, priest, and judge. Hannah’s integrity underscores the theological principles that all we possess belongs to God, that He honors those who honor Him, worship Him sacrificially, and trust His faithfulness unconditionally.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does Hannah’s life challenge our understanding of complete surrender to God?

A Closing Thought

Hannah’s backstory demonstrates the proper response to fears that dreams and hopes for the future might not come true, especially those aligned with God’s will and purpose: passionate, persistent, sincere, sacrificial, and faith-filled prayer. Her petition stands as one of the most genuine examples of intercession in the Bible. But how did she develop such a deep trust and spiritual clarity despite the shame, pain, and ridicule she faced because of her barrenness? The text shows that Hannah was a regular and consistent worshipper, proving that she had built an intimate and obedient relationship with God (1 Samuel 1:4, 7, 9). As a result, she confidently knew whom to turn to and where to seek reassurance that her God-given desire to have a child might still be fulfilled. Similarly, believers today need to nurture a steady relationship with the

Lord so that, during life's uncertainties or when hope fades, they are spiritually ready to bring their deepest longings to the only One capable of fulfilling them and to become His faithful witnesses.

Your Life

Hannah teaches us the importance of cultivating a vibrant prayer life filled with genuine passion and intensity, transparency, faith-filled persistence, and a willingness to submit to His will and purpose for our lives. Following her example involves building and maintaining a close, obedient relationship with God every day by yielding to the Holy Spirit's transformative power.

Your World!

Hannah stands out as a faithful witness to God because her life teaches believers that hope and faith must lead to prayer, and prayer must lead to surrender and worship. When we turn to God with our deepest desires and trust His timing and ways, we can find reassurance, peace, and purpose, even while we wait. This week, be a faithful witness and share Hannah's story with someone who needs reassurance that God can fulfill their delayed hopes and dreams that align with His will and purpose for their lives.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we bring our hopes and dreams to You in faith, submission, and the willingness to accept Your responses, knowing that they will be for our good and Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores how David honored his trustworthy friendship with Jonathan—an example to follow as faithful witnesses to God (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 Samuel 1:26-27; 21:7).

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, June 15	"Encouraging Each Other's Faith"	(Romans 1:8-12)
TUESDAY, June 16	"Choose Your Friends Wisely"	(1 Corinthians 15:30-34)
WEDNESDAY, June 17	"A Friend Closer than a Brother"	(Proverbs 18:19-24)
THURSDAY, June 18	"Friends When All Is Lost"	(Ruth 1:11-18)
FRIDAY, June 19	"The Greatest Love"	(John 15:9-17)
SATURDAY, June 20	"Fierce and Faithful Friends"	(1 Samuel 20:16-17, 32-34, 42)
SUNDAY, June 21	"A Death in the Family"	(2 Samuel 1:17, 19-27)