

# Lesson 11 | November 10, 2024

## Hannah: Devoted to God

**Study Text:** 1 Samuel 1:1 through 2:11

**Central Truth:** God hears and answers the earnest prayers of His people.

### Key Verse: 1 Samuel 1:20

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 (KJV).

In due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I asked the Lord for him” (NLT).

### Learning Objectives

- Students will affirm that God hears and answers His people’s prayers according to His will.
- Students will commit to regularly making their requests known to God.
- Students will choose to trust that God is using their struggles to refine them and work His purpose in their lives.

## Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** All people—from all periods of history—have a few things in common. We have basic needs, like food, clothing, and shelter. We get sick and struggle with sin. We desperately need a Savior. And we all have unmet expectations and unfulfilled dreams.

### Discussion Starter—When I Grow Up

**Say:** What is something your 10-year-old self wanted to be or do when you grew up? (*Examples: dunk a basketball, fly a helicopter, or become a famous chef*)

**Say:** Our dreams as children were probably very different from our reality as adults. Today, we’re going to look at the story of Hannah, a woman in the Old Testament whose dreams of motherhood were not fulfilled according to her expectations. Not only that, but a rival in her household tormented her mercilessly, making her disappointment almost unbearable. We’ll see how Hannah responded to her difficult situation and how God responded to her prayers.

As 1 Samuel opens, the nation of Israel was experiencing a leadership vacuum. Although judges like Samson and Jephthah were operating at this time, their leadership was regional. Israel was tribal and did not yet have a centralized government. Eli and his sons served as priests at the tabernacle in Shiloh, but they were inattentive to the people’s spiritual needs and neglected their priestly work. On the day the ark was captured by the Philistines, all three priests died (4:10, 17–18), and the tabernacle was

destroyed (verses 10–11; Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 7:12–14; 26:6; 26:9). But soon, God would raise up a new prophet to speak on His behalf to the entire nation. Hannah’s miraculous birth story was also a new beginning for the people of Israel.

## **Part 1—Hannah’s Plight Defined by Her Childlessness**

1 Samuel 1:1–3

**Say:** For women in Old Testament times, childlessness was a defining shame. Bearing children was an extremely important role for women. Their cultural value was usually tied to motherhood. Children were a sign of God’s blessing and necessary for survival. They worked alongside their families in the fields or the marketplace and cared for one another in sickness and old age. Many children did not survive to adulthood because of illness and adverse conditions, so parents usually had as many children as possible.

The Book of 1 Samuel begins by introducing Elkanah, who lived about five miles north of Jerusalem and belonged to the Zuphites, a Levitical (or priestly) clan (1 Chronicles 6:19–28). Elkanah had two wives—Hannah and Peninnah (*Pih-NIN-uh*)—and that created some significant relational challenges in his household.

First Samuel 1:3 describes how Elkanah and his wives and children journeyed every year to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship God, most likely during the Feast of Tabernacles after the fall harvest. This is the first time the title “Lord of hosts” (KJV) or “Lord of Heaven’s Armies” (NLT) appears in the Bible. The Hebrew term may have referred to human armies, heavenly beings, or celestial bodies, clearly establishing God as the ultimate leader of Israel even as the foundation was being laid for kingship.

Just as God was sovereign over the nation, He was sovereign over Hannah’s life. What seemed like a delay to her was simply part of God’s perfect timing. As we read about her desperate, passionate prayers in the verses ahead, we should remember that God was always listening and working on her behalf. She was just one small part of His grand plan to bless the whole world through the nation of Israel.

### **Discuss**

- When has God’s timing been different than yours?
- What are common responses when we have unmet desires and expectations?

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Children of Promise**

Many notable women in the Bible (including the wives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were childless before being miraculously blessed with children—all of whom grew up to play key roles in God’s redemption story. Students will review the stories of six biblical women and reflect on the reasons God chose to include the theme of infertility in His Word.

## Mocked by Her Rival

1 Samuel 1:4–8

**Say:** Let's not say any names out loud, but have you ever known a "mocker"—someone like Peninnah who took pleasure in making other people miserable? The Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about people like that. "A mocker refuses to listen to correction" (13:1). "Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who rejoice at the misfortune of others will be punished" (17:5). "Mockers are proud and haughty; they act with boundless arrogance" (21:24). "Throw out a mocker, and fighting goes, too. Quarrels and insults will disappear" (22:10). "Everyone detests a mocker" (24:9).

Although Elkanah and his family showed devotion and faithfulness to God, they still experienced intense conflict in their household—even during their pilgrimages to Shiloh. During their time at the tabernacle, Elkanah gave portions of the meat he sacrificed to his wives and children, but Hannah received a "worthy portion" (1 Samuel 1:5, KJV). Peninnah could see that her husband loved Hannah more, and perhaps this pain was why she mocked Hannah so mercilessly (verses 6–7). This was not friendly teasing. Every year as they traveled to the tabernacle to worship, Peninnah taunted Hannah until she was "reduced to tears and would not even eat" (verse 7).

Elkanah then confronted Hannah with a series of questions, a common rhetorical device in that culture. "Why are you crying? . . . Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?" (verse 8). Barraged by questions, grieved by her barrenness, and shamed by continual mocking, this must have been a miserable season in Hannah's life.

In Old Testament times, some men would marry multiple wives for a variety of reasons. But God's original design for marriage was for one man and one woman to enter into a covenant relationship. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 19:4–6. Even in families set up according to His plan, conflict is inevitable. We will see that Hannah provides an excellent example of how to deal with these family struggles: She takes them to God in prayer.

### **Discuss**

- Elkanah's family apparently experienced some of their worst conflict as they traveled to worship God at the tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:7). Have you ever experienced something similar? Why do you think this is one of the enemy's favorite strategies of attack?
- What are the dangers of allowing yourself to be defined by relational conflict? By unmet expectations? By unfulfilled dreams?

## Part 2—Hannah's Prayer

### Pouring Out Her Heart

1 Samuel 1:9–11

**Say:** Hannah’s struggle was lonely, deep, and personal. Even her husband didn’t understand the depth of her pain and disappointment. But in her most desperate moment, she turned to God, believing He would hear and answer.

“Hannah got up and went to pray” (1 Samuel 1:9). What simple yet life-altering words. As she went to the tabernacle “in deep anguish” (verse 10), it is possible she did not even see Eli sitting near the entrance. As high priest, he was likely stationed there during the feast to administer justice and transact business. But Hannah was focused on God, “crying bitterly as she prayed” (verse 10). She trusted the Lord to be her refuge and poured out her heart to Him (Psalm 62:8). “Look on your servant’s misery and remember me,” she begged (1 Samuel 1:11, NIV). In Hannah’s bitterness of soul, she realized God alone was her hope. Only He could give her a child and relieve her suffering.

Desperate, Hannah vowed that if God gave her a son, she would give her son back to Him. Every godly parent must realize their children belong to the Lord and continually give them back to Him, but Hannah took it a step further. She promised her son would serve at the tabernacle for a lifetime instead of the usual twenty-five years served by Levites (Numbers 8:23–26). She also promised that “his hair will never be cut,” implying that she was making a Nazirite vow on his behalf (6:1–21; Judges 13, especially verse 5).

We can see other examples in Scripture of faithful people who communicated with God honestly and transparently. King David poured out his fear, anger, disappointment, and frustration. He was quick to acknowledge his sin and ask for forgiveness and restoration (Psalm 51). Moses and Miriam freely celebrated God’s faithfulness and mercy (Exodus 15:1–21). Asaph poured out his despair to God (Psalm 77). Jesus prayed fervently in Gethsemane for God to allow Him to avoid impending suffering (Matthew 26:36–44). When we honestly pour out our hearts to God, we invite Him into our pain and suffering. He brings the healing our hearts so desperately need.

### ***Discuss***

- How does Hannah’s honesty encourage you to pray?
- How does transparency with God reveal deep trust in His unfailing love?

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Jesus’ Teachings on Prayer**

The Gospels are full of Jesus’ teachings on prayer. Students will read several passages to examine Jesus’ teachings and think about how they can implement them in their prayer time. This handout is designed for deeper Bible study and would work best as a take-home page for personal devotions.

## **Her Face Was No Longer Downcast**

1 Samuel 1:12–18

**Say:** Have you ever had a powerful experience with God that the people around you just didn’t understand? It happened to Jesus’ followers on the Day of Pentecost. When

the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues, some people in the crowd made fun of them: “They’re just drunk, that’s all!” (Acts 2:13). When Eli the priest saw Hannah fervently praying in the tabernacle, he jumped to the same conclusion.

Maybe Eli was accustomed to seeing the people overindulge during feasts or maybe Hannah’s emotions were so intense that she seemed beside herself. Either way, the priest did not have enough spiritual discernment to understand what was really going on. “Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound”—unlike most prayers in the ancient world, which were audible—“he thought she had been drinking” (1 Samuel 1:13).

Hannah answered Eli’s accusation by explaining that she had not been pouring in alcohol but rather pouring out her heart to the Lord (verse 15). She was “very discouraged” and had been “praying out of great anguish and sorrow” (verse 16). After she pleaded with the priest not to label her “a wicked woman,” he blessed her and prayed God would grant her request. Eli’s words made a dramatic impact on Hannah. She left the tabernacle and began to eat again, and her countenance changed. Something had shifted in Hannah. Her despair had given way to hope.

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Meditation on Philippians 4:6–8**

Hannah found peace only after she poured out her heart to God in prayer. Students will set aside a block of time to pray and meditate on the peace promised in Philippians 4:6–8, listening for the Holy Spirit’s direction. This handout would work best as a take-home page for personal devotions.

We must be careful not to bargain with God or make promises we don’t intend to keep (Ecclesiastes 5:1–5; Matthew 5:33–37). However, in this situation, Hannah’s offer to return Samuel to God was part of His overall plan for Israel. Could it be that Hannah’s barrenness was allowed by God to soften her heart? After all, her desperation is what led her to give her firstborn son back to God just when Israel needed a leader like Samuel. We have no way of knowing whether Hannah lived long enough to witness her son’s ministry, but we do know she had incredible faith in God’s ability to answer her prayer.

#### ***Discuss***

- Do you think Hannah’s desperation prepared her to release Samuel to God? Explain.
- How can difficulties draw us closer to the heart of God?

## **Part 3—Hannah’s Promise Fulfilled God Remembered Her**

1 Samuel 1:24–28

**Say:** Hannah had prayed, “O Lord of hosts . . . remember me” (1 Samuel 1:11, KJV). When it’s used here and elsewhere in the Bible, this phrase doesn’t imply God had

forgotten. Instead, it is a cry for God to move according to His will and promises. In verses 19–20, we see God’s response to Hannah’s earnest prayer: He remembered her plea, and she gave birth to a son. She chose the name Samuel, which means “I asked the Lord for him” (verse 20).

After Samuel’s birth, Hannah did not join the family on their annual journey to the tabernacle; she made the choice to care for her baby at home instead. However, when Samuel was old enough to be weaned (customarily, three years old), Hannah brought him to the tabernacle in Shiloh, just as she had promised (1 Samuel 1:24). The original text seems to indicate the family brought an offering up to three times larger than the acceptable amount, probably out of extreme gratitude.

After making their sacrifice, Hannah and Elkanah brought Samuel to Eli and explained the situation. God had answered Hannah’s prayer, and she was keeping her vow. The boy would live at the tabernacle as Eli’s assistant and apprentice. He would “belong to the Lord his whole life” (verse 28). Hannah’s selfless sacrifice as a mother stands in stark contrast to Eli’s indulgence as a father. His sons were selfish and wicked with “no respect for the Lord” (2:12). Enabled by their father, they “treated the Lord’s offerings with contempt. But Samuel, though he was only a boy, served the Lord” (verses 17–18). As a result, it would be Samuel, not Eli or his sons, who heard God’s voice and spoke on His behalf (3:1–21).

God strategically placed Samuel at this point in history to lead His people and anoint Saul and David as Israel’s first two kings. Hannah had no way of knowing that her personal struggle was part of God’s overall plan for Israel.

### ***Discuss***

- Psalm 115:12–13 says the Lord remembers His people and will bless those who fear Him, “both great and lowly.” How does this encourage you?
- What lessons can we learn from Hannah’s story about trusting God’s timing?

## **My Heart Rejoices in the Lord!**

1 Samuel 2:1–3

**Say:** Instead of ending on a cliffhanger and making us wonder how Hannah felt about leaving Samuel at the tabernacle, Scripture makes it clear: Her heart rejoiced in the Lord!

In Hannah’s prayerful song of praise, she asked God for nothing. She simply expressed her faith in Him and thanked Him for all He had done. Hannah had many reasons to praise God. He had given her the deepest desire of her heart. He knew her, understood her, and answered her prayer. He was sovereign over the world and everyone in it. And He had filled her with joy as she kept her promise to Him.

Hannah testified first to the way God had personally delivered her (1 Samuel 2:1) before the song widened out to describe the justice He carries out worldwide. In the original



language, verse 1 includes short, parallel descriptions of how Hannah’s entire being was involved in praising God: Her heart rejoiced, her strength (or “horn”) was increased, and her mouth was enlarged over her enemies (meaning she had swallowed them up).

The structure of verse 2 is also muddled in translation. All three phrases in the original language begin with a word meaning “there is none,” creating echoing bursts of praise: “*There is none* holy like the Lord; for *there is none* besides you; *there is no* rock like our God” (ESV, *emphasis added*). Hannah’s reference to God as a rock echoed wording from the Song of Moses: “The rock of our enemies is not like our Rock, as even they recognize” (Deuteronomy 32:31).

Hannah then explained that human pride has no place in the presence of this God (1 Samuel 2:3). He knows all and will judge all, as the rest of her song goes on to illustrate. In fact, God’s judgment would soon fall upon Israel at that very place. The tabernacle at Shiloh would be destroyed, the ark would be captured, and Eli and his two sons would die (1 Samuel 4).

Much like Naomi, Hannah experienced a complete reversal. After waiting so long for one son, she would go on to have five more children—three sons and two daughters (2:19–21). Meanwhile Scripture describes how Samuel matured: “The boy Samuel grew taller and grew in favor with the Lord and with the people” (verse 26; see a similar description of Jesus in Luke 2:52).

On the other side of waiting, we often see how God was at work the entire time. He sees the beginning from the end and is continually revealing His redemptive plan through His people. We don’t always know or understand why we face certain struggles. But Hannah’s story reminds us that God does have a plan. When we pour out our hearts to Him, we can have faith He will answer in His time and according to His plan.

#### **Resource Packet Item 4: Songs of Praise**

Mary’s song of praise in Luke 1 parallels Hannah’s song of praise in many ways. Students will compare the two songs, reflecting on their significance.

#### **Discuss**

- How do times of waiting lead to greater rejoicing when God answers our prayers?
- How would you encourage someone who has been waiting a long time for God to answer their prayers?

### **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** We can stand on the truth that God hears and answers our prayers in His own time (2 Peter 3:8–9). When His schedule doesn’t align with ours, we can still trust Him. The Lord is faithful. He will keep every promise He has made.

### **Living It Out Ministry in Action**

- Spend extra time this week praying for your loved ones who are far from God. Ask Him to soften their hearts and show them His love. Pray they will respond to His kindness by repenting.
- Is there an area where you haven't been completely honest with God? Take some time to pour out your heart to Him. Ask Him to redeem the broken places in your heart.
- Have lunch or coffee with someone who is walking through a difficult season. Listen to their story, pray for them, and encourage them.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Samson's Cry for Vengeance.

Judges 16:23–31

Tuesday:

God Hears Our Prayers.

Psalms 116:1–5

Wednesday:

Daniel Intercedes for His People.

Daniel 9:17–19

Thursday:

Persistence in Prayer.

Luke 18:1–8

Friday:

Grateful Prayer Produces Peace.

Philippians 4:4–9

Saturday:

Prayer Is Powerful.

James 5:13–18