

Women of the Church Study

Month 21 Week 1

Hannah

Hannah's story is located in 1 Samuel 1:1-28-2-21. Hannah was married to Elkanah who also had another wife, Peninnah. Hannah was barren. Peninnah, who had children, tormented Hannah because of this. Hannah was forced to endure the humiliation of being barren and in addition she had to endure the ridicule of Peninnah over this. This went on for many years, with Hannah praying continuously for a child. Elkanah seemed to have been a good and loving husband and he expressed concern to Hannah about her distress and expressed his love for her.

Every year Hannah's husband took the whole family to worship the Lord and make the sacrifices that God had commanded in the Old Testament. On one of their yearly visits to the Sanctuary at Shiloh, Hannah went to the Temple and poured out her heart silently and passionately to God. She did so with great emotion; so much so that Eli the High Priest thought that she may be drunk and questioned her about this. She explained her situation regarding having no children to Eli and he assured her that her prayer for children would be answered. When Hannah prayed, she vowed that would she be granted a son, in return she would offer that child for service in the temple when the child was weaned.

God grants Hannah the gift of a child, whom she names Samuel, or son of God. It is understood from the Law in Leviticus that Hannah could have fulfilled her vow by offering money for the support of the priests and the Temple at Shiloh. Indeed, she could have done less, as her pledge was known only to God and her husband. However, Hannah, with the support of Elkanah, honors her pledge literally and presents Samuel to Eli after weaning.

Hannah saw her son Samuel, every year when she went up to the annual worship service with her family. It must have pleased and comforted her to see her son learning and growing into a man of God. Samuel became the last of Israel's judges, a great prophet, and wise counsellor to its first two Kings, Saul and David. Hannah later had three more sons and two daughters.

Hannah was the fourth woman in biblical history to suffer through infertility. (Others included Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel). Hannah accepted God's promise with unwavering faith. Hannah's prayer at the temple after leaving her son Samuel, has become famous and has significant meaning; it is considered by some to be a prophecy related to King David and even to Jesus the Messiah and it anticipates Mary's Magnificat. (Included in Week 3 materials).

<https://www.english.op.org/godzdogz/women-of-the-old-testament-hannah>

<https://karenrobertsblog.wordpress.com/page/2/>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/5-things-you-didn-t-know-about-hannah-in-the-bible.html>

Women of the Church Study

Month 21 Week 2

Hannah

Reflections

--We have all probably experienced what we consider “unanswered” prayer. This was certainly Hannah’s experience for an extended period of time. In the end, Hannah received much more than she prayed for or expected!

How should we view “unanswered” prayer?

Have you experienced prayer you felt was unanswered? What has this been like?

Have your prayers been answered in a different way or at a different time than expected?

--Note how Hannah promised if she had a child, she would give her child to the Lord. Although at first glance, we might consider this a way of “bargaining” with God, possibly it could be considered more an expression of “doing her part” as she offered her requests of God. Think about some of the things you are praying for/about.

What might you do as your “part”?

What might you offer God as you ask him for your answer?

Are you willing to “give up” something in order for your prayer to be answered?

--Hannah had to deal with shame in her culture, unkindness, criticism and ridicule from Peninnah and later unfair questions from Eli. She appeared to keep quiet in the face of this and not return harsh words. Rather she seemed to sustain her countenance and even offer grace

What are positive and healthy ways we might manage shame and/or ridicule or criticism?

How can we extend grace to others who appear to be negative toward us?

--Hannah demonstrated extreme faith in God even in the face of ongoing, difficult, and seemingly unfair circumstances. She persisted in prayer and openly expressed her feelings of distress and sorrow to the Lord.

How can we persist in our faith?

How can we pray “from the heart” as Hannah did, expressing all of our grief, heartache and distress, yet still remain faithful?

Women of the Church Study

Month 21 Week 3

Hannah Prayers/Devotions

Hannah's prayer (from 1 Samuel 2: 1-10)

“My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my God.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.
2 “There is no Holy One like the Lord,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
4 The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.
5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
6 The Lord kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.
8 He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and on them he has set the world.
9 “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
for not by might does one prevail.
The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered;
the Most High will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king,
and exalt the power of his anointed.”

“Saint Hannah continues to be the patron saint of married couples without children, and couples who struggle with infertility. While miracles like hers are rare, Hannah’s story reminds us yet again of the awesome and all-powerful will of God. His plan is far more than we can ever comprehend, and His timing is always perfect. If you find yourself in a similar situation as Hannah, or in an equally difficult situation, turn to her example of complete openness and dependence on God. Take a look at Hannah’s prayer below. Instead of praying it exactly, insert your own name, your own intentions, and your own desires. God may surprise you with His answer.”

“O Lord of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child I will give him to the Lord ...” (1 Samuel 1:11)

<https://clevelandcatholiccemeteries.wordpress.com/2018/05/03/saint-hannah-an-example-of-faithful-trust-and-prayer/>

Women of the Church Study

Month 21 Week 4

Hannah Practical Applications

--Reflect upon your prayer life. Although it is likely very good, consider how the ways Hannah prayed which may fit into the way you pray. Try “praying from the heart” as Hannah did, lamenting before the Lord, but also praising him. Journal your prayers or your experience.

--Consider Hannah’s unwavering faith, demonstrated in her everyday life and in prayer. Identify one thing in your life for which you can decide to have unwavering faith. Find ways to live this out, including through prayer.

--Hannah was a person who demonstrated much grace to those around her. Think of a situation where you may be able to show grace to another person, especially maybe in a difficult relationship or situation; remember this may mean adjusting if you speak or what you say to the other person! Make a plan to do this and keep a record of how it goes in your journal.