



Growth Group Spring 2020

Can You Help Me To Pray?

Week 6 – May 24, 2020 - 1 Samuel 1:1-18

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

Things were not going all that well in Israel. Eli was ministering in Israel at Shiloh, but unfortunately, he did not exercise proper authority over his two sons (Phineas and Hophni) who were also serving as priests. Their conduct disgraced their high calling and shocked the people so much that they “abhorred the offering of the Lord.” It is in this context that Hannah approaches the Lord’s house and prays that God will help her to conceive. Little did she know that her answered prayer would result in the birth of Samuel, who would help shape the future of Israel for decades.

At this time the temple of Israel had not yet been built in Jerusalem. The tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were in Shiloh, which was about 25 miles north of Jerusalem, and it was there that the Jewish people brought their offerings. Shiloh would serve as the center of Jewish worship until the death of Eli, when the ark of the covenant was taken by the Philistines and Shiloh was destroyed.

More than likely Hannah was Elkanah’s first wife, but when she was unable to get pregnant he married Peninnah, so that his family line would continue. Though God did not look with favor on this, it was not an unknown practice. In this story Hannah has to endure Peninnah’s mocking, Elkanah’s insensitivity (see end of verse 8) and finally Eli’s cluelessness.

Yet, she continues to pray for a child. She prays out of her anguish and her grief. If you look at 1 Samuel 2 you can see more details of another prayer she prayed after she dedicated Samuel back to the Lord.

Hannah is a portrait of faithfulness. We don’t know how many years she went to Shiloh seeking the Lord’s favor so that she could have a child, but we do know that she was persistent and she continued to believe that God would answer her prayer. In verse 17 she receives the words she has been waiting so long to hear. Eli says, “Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”



Verse 18 tells us that at that moment her whole countenance changed. God had heard her prayer and God would answer her prayer request. Her face was no longer downcast and she ate something. Even though God had not yet completely fulfilled her request, Hannah is a changed person. She now knows that God is at work and she can rest in that knowledge. She can find joy in the midst of her sadness.

Exploring the Text

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-18

¹ There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. ⁴ 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. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. ⁶ Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah 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?" 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.

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) How do you pray? Aloud, silently, journaling, in the morning, at night? What has worked well for you?
- 2) We are told often in the Bible that we should pray. What do you think is the point of prayer?
- 3) Pastor Paul alluded to a model of prayer known as ACTS.

A -Adoration of God

C- Confession of sins

T- Thanksgiving for the actions and work of God

S- Supplication where we place our prayers and concerns before God.

Which of these is easiest for you? Which is the most difficult? Why?

- 4) Can you think of a time when a delayed answer to prayer was a blessing.
- 5) Do you think that Hannah is bargaining with God? Have you ever bargained with God?
- 6) Hannah showed persistence and passion in her prayers. Why do you think that we should be persistent in our prayers? If God knows what is going on, why should we keep going back to Him?

- 7) Hannah's emotions are obvious in this prayer. Can you think of a time in your life when you have prayed to God like this? Where your grief was evident? When you didn't necessarily use words, but poured out your heart before God?
- 8) We read in verse 18 that Hannah's disposition changed after Eli told her that God would answer her prayer. The interesting thing is that God had not done anything yet. Why do you think her attitude changed? What does that tell us about Hannah's faith and trust?