

1 SAMUEL 1:1–2:11

Hannah: Prayer, Surrender, and a Song That Echoes

Lesson at a glance

Hannah's story is short but emotionally weighty. The lesson walks through the divided household of Elkanah, the cruelty of Peninnah, Hannah's tears at Shiloh, her bold vow, Eli's misreading of her silent prayer, the birth and surrender of Samuel, and finally her remarkable song in 1 Samuel 2:1 to 10. That song will later become the model for Mary's Magnificat. The thread that ties it all together is the dangerous prayer Hannah finally prays: "Whatever You give me, Lord, it is Yours."

Goals for this session

First, that each woman would feel free to bring her honest grief to God, not in spite of the assembly but in the middle of it.

Second, that any woman who has been quietly clutching what God has given her would be moved toward open-handed surrender.

Third, that the group would marvel together at Hannah's theology in song, and would feel the link to Mary's Magnificat that we will reach in Lesson 12.

Fourth, that any woman in the room who has been misread by a spiritual leader, or by a friend, would receive comfort from Hannah's calm answer to Eli.

Preparing to lead

Read 1 Samuel 1 to 2 in one sitting earlier in the week, ideally aloud. Hannah's song reads best when you have heard it spoken.

Read Luke 1:46 to 55 alongside Hannah's song. Note the echoes. This will set up Lesson 12 beautifully.

Pray for each woman by name. Pay particular attention to anyone in your group who has walked through infertility, miscarriage, the loss of a child, or estrangement from her children. Hannah's story will press on those wounds.

Sensitive topics in this lesson

Infertility, miscarriage, and the loss of a child. Hannah's ache is the ache of many women in our congregations, named and unnamed. The lesson does not soften it, and you should not either. Move tenderly. Pray over the women in your group who carry this particular grief.

Cruelty inside the family (Peninnah, question 3). The pain that comes from a sister, sister-in-law, stepfamily member, or in-law is often more searing than pain from outside. The For Thought and Discussion box in the lesson opens the door. Let women speak honestly, without letting the discussion drift into a venting session.

Being misunderstood by a spiritual leader (question 7). Some of the women in your group have been wounded by a preacher, an elder, an elder's wife, or a previous group leader. Hannah's gentle answer to Eli is a beautiful model. Do not miss it.

Surrendering what we asked for (questions 10, 15). For some women, the deepest pain is not in waiting; it is in giving back something God gave them: a grown child, a marriage, a ministry, a home. Be gentle.

Suggested 60- to 75-minute schedule

Five minutes: welcome.

Five minutes: open in prayer. Read 1 Samuel 1:9 to 18 aloud.

Five minutes: warm-up. Ask each woman to share, briefly, about a prayer she has prayed for a long time (answered or unanswered). Keep it short.

Thirty-five to forty minutes: discussion. Choose six or seven questions in advance.

Five to ten minutes: "Your response" reflection. Allow real silence and time to write.

Five minutes: closing prayer.

Discussion priorities

Make sure these are among the questions you discuss: 5 and 6 (her honest prayer and vow), 8 (the change in her before circumstances changed), 10 (the cost of keeping the vow), 11 to 13 (her song and the Messianic prophecy), and 14 to 15 (your response).

Notes on key questions

Question 3. Peninnah's cruelty is not the main point of the lesson, but it does set the table. Family cruelty in particular has a long shelf life. Encourage women who have been on the receiving end of it to take comfort in how God responded to Hannah: He took her seriously, He answered her, and He raised up Samuel from her household, not Peninnah's. God's vindication of His grieving daughters is patient, but it is real.

Question 5. Hannah does not stay home and sulk. She goes to the place of worship and pours her grief out there. This is a quiet but important point for women who are tempted to drift away from the assembly when they are hurting. The aim is to draw near, not to withdraw (Hebrews 10:22 to 25).

Question 6. Hannah's vow asks for a son in order to give him back. This is the deepest kind of prayer: "Lord, what You give, You may have." Encourage the women to consider whether any of their own requests have an unspoken clause attached: "as long as I get to keep it."

Question 7. Eli misreads her tears as drunkenness. Hannah does not explode, does not retreat, does not gossip about him later. She explains herself calmly and goes on. This is a remarkable model for women who have been misjudged by spiritual leaders.

Question 8. Verse 18 says her face was no longer sad, before any circumstance had changed. That is the gift of true prayer. The situation may not move; the heart can. Linger here for the women in your group who are stuck in a season that is not yet changing.

Question 10. Hannah keeps her vow. She brings Samuel, perhaps three or four years old, to live at the tabernacle with the very priest who once thought she was drunk. This is one of the hardest acts of faith in the Old Testament. Mothers in your group will feel its weight without your help.

Questions 11 to 13. Hannah's song is the first great song of praise in the historical books, and the model for the Magnificat. Read Luke 1:46 to 55 alongside it in the group. Make sure the women see that Mary, twelve weeks from now, will lean on Hannah's words. The Messianic prophecy in 2:10 (mashiach, Messiah, anointed) closes the song with a window all the way to Christ.

Questions 14 and 15. Personal response. Hannah teaches us to pray honestly when we are in pain, and to keep our hands open when God answers. Give the women time to write. Some will want to share; some will not. Be content with whatever level of openness the group offers.

About the Study Skills in this lesson

Two Study Skills appear in Lesson 6. The Difference Between Description and Prescription is one of the most important interpretive habits in Bible study. Polygamy is described in Scripture; it is not prescribed. The lesson uses Elkanah's household as a teaching moment. The second skill, Reading Hebrew Poetry, will serve the women not only in 1 Samuel 2 but in the Psalms, the Magnificat, and many other places. Demonstrate parallelism on one line of Hannah's song in the group hour.

A suggested closing prayer

Pray your own prayer. A sample, if you would like one:

"Father, thank You for Hannah. Thank You that You hear the prayers we cannot speak aloud, that You take our tears seriously even when others misread them, and that You have given us a song to sing back to You. Teach us to bring our griefs to You honestly. Teach us to keep our hands open with what You

have given us. Help us to look with Hannah toward Your anointed King, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom every promise finds its Yes. In His name we pray. Amen."

Looking ahead to Lesson 7

Next week is Abigail, 1 Samuel 25, an entire chapter rather than a chapter-long span. Encourage the women to read 1 Samuel 24, 25, and 26 in order. The sandwich of the three chapters is part of the meaning. Abigail's wisdom will give the group new vocabulary for handling tense situations.