

Hannah Prays

(1 Samuel 1:1-20)

Introduction

Does God answer prayer? How? Does He always give us what we ask of Him? [Teacher, allow children to discuss briefly.] God has three answers to every prayer we pray: “Yes,” “No,” or “Wait!” God doesn’t always give us what we ask for, but He always gives us what we need. God loves us and wants the very best for us. Sometimes that means He doesn’t give us what we ask for.

Today we will see how God answered the prayer of Hannah.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for always hearing our prayers and answering them according to Your will. Thank You that you have a plan and a purpose for my life and that You always want the very best for me. I love You and want to follow You all the days of my life. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

You, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me. (Psalm 86:17b NKJ)

Lesson

Israel had been ruled by judges for over 200 years. Today we begin a study in the book of 1 Samuel. It begins in the days when the judges still ruled Israel, possibly during the closing years of Samson’s life.

The period of judges was a sad time in the history of the Israelites. It was a time when the people did not have a strong leader, so they didn’t have strong faith in God. Then, Samuel came along. He was the last of the judges and he was Israel’s greatest judge.

1 Samuel begins with the story of Samuel’s mom and dad before Samuel was born.

1 Samuel 1:1-2 [Teacher, read...]

There was a man named Elkanah who... had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not.

(We’re going to call Elkanah, “Elk,” and Peninnah, “Penny” today just to make it easier to read, OK?)

How sad for Hannah. She was not able to have children. In those days, a woman who could not have children was considered a failure in life. Some people thought that a woman who did not have children was being punished by God. Children are a gift from God and to be childless was a shameful thing to Hannah. She wanted a baby very much.

It was a custom in those days, that if your wife couldn’t give you children, you could either divorce your wife or take a second wife. This was not God’s plan; this was a rule that the people made up for themselves. Elkanah could have divorced Hannah because she was not able to give him children. But he didn’t because he loved Hannah. But, he did take a second wife and that was not a good thing for Hannah, as we will see.

1 Samuel 1:3 [Teacher, read...]

Each year Elkanah would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of Heaven’s Armies at the Tabernacle. The priests of the LORD at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas.

Every year Elkanah and his family traveled from their home at Ramah up into the mountains at Shiloh, where they worshiped God. This was one of the three major holidays that the Israelites celebrated every year, just like we celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas.

1 Samuel 1: 4-5

On the days Elkanah presented his sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to Peninnah and each of her children. And though he loved Hannah, he would give her only one choice portion because the LORD had given her no children.

[Teacher, the NKJ, NASB, and ESV versions all say that he gave Hannah a double portion, but NLT says he only gave her one portion.]

Elkanah loved Hannah very much and this made Peninnah very jealous.

1 Samuel 1:6

So Peninnah would taunt Hannah and make fun of her because the LORD had kept her from having children.

Peninnah *provoked* Hannah. Instead of trying to make Hannah feel better, Peninnah made fun of Hannah! I can just hear Peninnah jeering Hannah, “*Look at you, Hannah!*” she might have said. “*God has not given you even one little child. I have many children! God must love me more than you!*”

Has anyone made fun of you? How do you think Hannah felt when Peninnah made fun of her?

1 Samuel 1:7

Year after year it was the same—Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle. Each time, Hannah would be reduced to tears and would not even eat.

Poor Hannah! Peninnah’s taunting and teasing made her so sad that she could not stop crying. She felt so terrible she couldn’t even eat.

1 Samuel 1:8

“Why are you crying, Hannah?” Elkanah would ask. “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?”

Hannah knew her husband loved her, but even his encouragement could not comfort her. Her bitterness blinded her to the fact that God had given her a wonderful loving husband. She could not keep from listening to Peninnah’s jeers and letting Peninnah’s words break her heart.

You and I need to be careful not to let our hurt feelings make us bitter and angry and resentful. When we hang on to hurts it makes our attitudes sour. Bitterness blinds us and we lose sight of our

blessings; we forget about all the good things God has done for us; we forget to be thankful for the many ways God has blessed us. God wants us to have a joyful heart. We need to be quick to forgive people when they hurt our feelings. But Hannah couldn’t let go of her hurt.

1 Samuel 1:9-10

Once after a sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance of the Tabernacle. Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD.

One day while they were in Shiloh, Hannah felt so sad that she quietly left the table where everyone was eating and she went up to the place of worship and began to pray. Eli, the priest, saw Hannah weeping and praying to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:11

And she made this vow: “O LORD of Heaven’s Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut.”

Hannah brought her problem honestly before God. She did just what God wants you to do. She prayed to Him. Isn’t it wonderful to know that you and I can talk to God about anything and everything? He is always listening. And, He cares about everything that concerns you. God wants His children to come to Him in prayer when they are sad. He wants you to talk to Him about the things that make you unhappy.

When you feel angry because your friends treat you unkindly, talk to the Lord about it. If your friend is not a Christian, tell God. If someone you know is sick, pray for that person. God wants you to tell Him your problems. Hannah did that. And, as Hannah discovered, prayer opens the way for God to work.

1 Samuel 1:12-14

As she was praying to the LORD, Eli watched her. Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!"

Hannah was so intent on her prayer, that only her lips were moving and Eli thought she was drunk! What do you think Hannah said?

1 Samuel 1:15-16

"Oh no, sir!" she replied. "I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD. Don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow."

Hannah just poured out her heart to Eli. And that pleased God very much.

1 Samuel 1:17

"In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."

Eli knew that God would surely do what was best for Hannah so he told her to go in peace. Eli was reminding Hannah that as she brought her requests to God in faith, she could have peace knowing that God would answer in the way that was best for her. As you trust God, He will give you peace (Philippians 4:6-7). Eli knew that God would answer Hannah's prayer in His own perfect way, so he told her to go in peace.

1 Samuel 1:18

"Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad.

Eli's kind words comforted Hannah. It changed her attitude, hadn't it! Now she was cheerful and was able to go back and join in the celebration. She didn't know if she would ever have a baby; but she had hope. She had told God her problem and how sad she felt. She

knew the Lord had heard her prayer and was going to answer her request! You can talk to God about any problem you have, too. He hears your prayers and you can rely upon Him to answer them.

The next day they all went back home to Ramah and not long after that, Hannah found that she was going to have a baby!

1 Samuel 1:20

and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the LORD for him."

God answered Hannah's prayer! Now it didn't matter what anyone said.

About three years later, when Samuel was a little boy, Hannah kept her promise to the Lord. Do you remember what that was? Look back at verse 11. She had told God if He would give her a son that she would give him to the Lord for his entire lifetime.

You have to be careful what you promise the Lord; He will expect you to keep your promises to Him. Hannah was faithful to do what she promised. Hannah took Samuel to Shiloh and gave him to Eli the priest. Hannah gave up what she had wanted most – her son – and presented him to Eli to serve in the house of the Lord. Samuel became Eli's assistant there serving the Lord.

Hannah never forgot her much-wanted son. She visited him every year when she and Elkanah went up to the feast. Every year she would bring him new clothes that she had made for him.

Hannah praised God for his answer to her prayer for a son. We should be thankful for the ways God blesses us and answers our prayers.

Are you willing to trust God to answer your prayers in the way that is best for you? He won't always give you what you ask for because He knows that some things are not good for you. Sometimes He will make you wait for a while before He grants your request. But, if you believe God wants you to have something, keep on praying faithfully

for it (Luke 18:1). Because God loves you, He will hear your prayers and give you what's really best for you.

When trouble comes or when we feel sad, we can pray to God like Hannah did. God will comfort and help us!

Closing Prayer

Father, Hannah was sad because Peninnah made fun of her for not having any children. But You heard her prayers and sent Eli to talk with her. Thank You for helping us and comforting us when we are sad. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

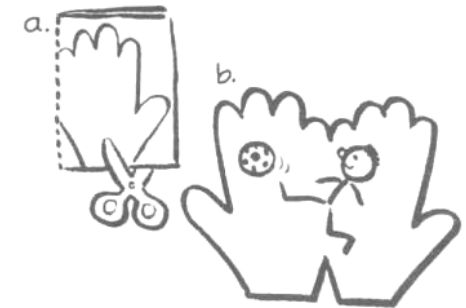
Praying Hands Prayer Journals

Materials:

- Bibles
- Construction paper
- Pencils and Markers
- Scissors

Preparation:

1. Fold construction paper in half widthwise.
2. Place hand on page with pinky finger next to folded edge.
3. Trace around hand, keeping fingers together.
4. Cut out hands without cutting through folded edge.
5. Open paper hands to make a prayer journal.
6. List prayer requests in the prayer journal or draw pictures of situations in which you might ask for God's help. Or, optionally, write the Memory Verse in the prayer journal.
7. Present the prayer journal to the Lord and see how He answers prayer.



As children work, ask the following questions:

- When is a time you were sad and someone helped and comforted you? What did he or she do?
- What did God do to comfort and help Hannah? (God sent Eli to listen to her problem. God also heard and answered Hannah's prayer.)
- [Teacher, review the memory verse.] Who does Psalm 87:17 say will comfort us? (God) God isn't a person we can see. But He helps us remember His love by giving us people who can help us and comfort us when we're sad.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Who was the last and greatest judge in Israel? (Samuel)
2. Hannah was barren. What does that mean? (She couldn't have any children.)
3. Why was Hannah ashamed because she wasn't able to have children? (In those days, a barren woman was considered a failure in life; someone who was being punished by God.)
4. What did Peninnah do to Hannah? (She teased her; hurt her feelings.)
5. One time when the family was up at Shiloh for a celebration, what did Hannah do because she felt so terrible about being barren? (She went to the temple to pray.)
6. What are some things that you can talk to God about in prayer? (When you feel angry because your friends treat you unkindly, if your friend is not a Christian, if someone is sick...)
7. What did Eli think when he saw Hannah praying so intensely? (Hannah was drunk.)
8. What three ways does God answer prayer? (No, Yes, Wait)
9. Why doesn't God always give you what you ask for? (It may not be good for you.)
10. What changed Hannah's attitude? Why did she finally have peace? (She knew that God had heard her prayers.)
11. What did Hannah promise God if He would give her a baby? (She had told God if He would give her a son that she would give him to the Lord for his entire lifetime.)

12. When did Hannah keep her promise to God? (When Samuel was about three years old Hannah gave him to Eli, the priest, to be his helper in the temple.)

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