



## SESSION TWO – HANNAH’S PRAYER

Hannah is a significant biblical figure with an important part to play in the story of God. She is a woman of notable faith who is tormented by challenging life circumstances and relational difficulties. Amidst it all, Hannah makes the bold choice to trust God and turns back to praise him when he faithfully delivers her from her anguish.

### CONTEXT

Hannah’s prayer enters the biblical narrative at a crucial point. God has proven his faithfulness to his people over and over. He has promised to be with them, delivered them from slavery, established them in a land of abundance, and guided them in how to live as a community which reflects his love and righteousness into the world around them. However, God’s people have struggled with trusting him, and they have frequently done whatever they deemed to be right instead of following his ways. This made their situation progressively worse and worse. They became a community that abused and mistrusted one another instead of one marked by holiness and love. They also began to clamor for a human king to rule over them, like the neighboring peoples had, instead of continuing to trust God and his leadership. When Hannah comes onto the scene, the community of God’s people is marked by significant moral decay and decided lack of unity. However, God is preparing to make a big move toward changing that.

Unfolding within that cultural context we meet Hannah, an ordinary woman with a heavy heart.

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-28.

1. This section divides into four main parts. Provide a brief summary of what happens in each section:
  - a. Verses 1-8
  - b. Verses 9-18
  - c. Verses 19-20
  - d. Verses 21-28
2. Sketch out a brief description of Hannah, her circumstances, and her mental and emotional state as described in 1 Samuel 1:1-11.
3. What does verse 10 indicate about Hannah's state of mind when she enters into prayer?
4. What does Hannah ask for when she prays in this section of Scripture? What does she promise to God in return?
5. In verses 12-14, why does Eli think Hannah is drunk? What does this suggest about the prayer she is uttering at the time?

6. What reason does Hannah offer for her behavior in verses 15-16?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does verse 18 suggest about her demeanor after she has finished praying? Suggest a potential explanation for any changes you note in her behavior.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What phrase from verse 11 is repeated in verse 19? Similarly, what phrase from verse 17 is repeated in verse 27? What does this suggest about the correspondence between what Hannah asked of God and what he delivered?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Looking back over this chapter, what do you notice about how Hannah chose to manage her own misery, and what happened as a result of her actions?

## THE PRAYER

Hannah has journeyed from the depths of despair to the heights of having her deepest longing fulfilled. She has witnessed firsthand the faithfulness of God and understands that her trust in him was well-placed. God reversed her circumstances and blessed her with a son. In her prayer, she approaches God with praise and thanksgiving, declaring him to be a God who rescues and restores.

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

1. Describe in your own words the main theme of Hannah's prayer and the main points that it makes. If you like, use the thematic divisions of verses 1-3, verses 4-8, and verses 9-10 as a guide.
2. Contrast what Hannah says about her mental and emotional state in verse 1 with what she expressed in chapter 1 (see Context section above).
3. What has Hannah been given victory over?
4. What do the reversals of fortune noted in verses 4 and 5 suggest about what God values and what he rewards?
5. What does the last sentence of verse 8 suggest about where God derives his authority?
6. What symbol recurs in verse 1 and verse 10? To whom does it belong in each verse?
7. Go back through the prayer and note all the descriptions of God Hannah provides.
8. What unlikely outcome does God enact in verse 8, and for whom?

9. Notice that in verse 9 Hannah shifts from using past tense verbs to future tense. What does this suggest?
  
10. According to verses 9 and 10, from where do the faithful derive their strength, and what results from their trust in that source?
  
11. What does the prayer suggest Hannah believes about God? How do those beliefs shape how she approaches him in prayer?

## PRACTICE

Two significant components of Hannah's interaction with God in 1 Samuel 1-2 stand out: trust and praise.

Hannah's life circumstances indicated that she was a woman who had over many years built a routine of faithfulness to God. She had maintained relationship with him, and when her personal distress was at its most intense it was God to whom she turned. Hannah knew that her confidence in God was well-placed. She trusted him to see her, know her anguish, and work to bring about his purposes in her life.

1. What is one area in which you have demonstrated trust in God? What is one area in which you are holding back from complete trust?
  
2. What indicators will be present in your prayer life that will show you have deepened your trust in God? What assistance do you need from God in order to bring those about?

The second significant component of Hannah's prayer was praise. She reflects on God's character as compassionate and capable of bringing about change in the lives of those for whom he cares. She recognizes his authority and revels in how he works powerfully to bring about what he intends for his people.

1. What aspect of your life currently bears the clear marks of God's handiwork? This could be a blessing you have received, a way in which he has rescued you, a promise he has fulfilled, etc.
  
2. How frequently does your prayer include outright praise for God and what he has done, both for you personally and for his people throughout history?
  
3. List several attributes of God which make him worthy of praise.

Using your answers to the above questions as a guide, start a conversation with God about the level of trust you have in your relationship with him. Celebrate together the places in which you have rested fully in him, and be honest about the areas in which your trust is still developing. Then continue your conversation by offering him heartfelt praise, both for what he has done and for who he is. Conclude by exploring any insights or prompting you feel the Holy Spirit is bringing to you through your study of Hannah's prayer.

Use the space provided below to write out your prayer, or to record your experience and insights gained as a result of your prayer.