

STORIES OF FAITH

Hannah

Small Group Study Notes by Sally Shanks

READ 1 Samuel

Read 1 Samuel as a group, taking turns to read.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you notice about this story as you read? What is the most crucial issue that this family are facing?
2. Does this story suggest that being ruled by Kings will be a good thing for God's people?
3. Are there any features of this story of faith being 'tested' that you relate to in your own experience?

SETTING THE SCENE

Jonny gave some of the background to the period of the Judges when he spoke about Deborah, and he reminded us of the biblical catch-phrase for this time of moral and spiritual chaos "There was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes". The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel pick up on this thread- the need of the people for leaders who are wise, who will remain faithful to God and who are capable of defeating Israel's enemies- at this point in time- the invading armies of the Philistines.

Those of you who are familiar with the story know that God brings about a divine reversal of Hannah's circumstances and in due course Hannah gives birth to her son, Samuel and dedicates him to God's service. Hannah's reversal serves as a prophetic pledge that God would also lift away the oppression from the nation of Israel. breaking his long silence. God speaks audibly to the child Samuel, calling him by name. Samuel in turn goes on to anoint firstly Saul and then David as kings of Israel.

Hannah's story links us to the places in our own stories where we have been derailed by circumstances over which we have little control. Her gut-level honesty gives us all permission to tell it how it is- to grieve, to receive compassion. Sometimes we've lost hope, we've given up praying, we feel that God has let us down. Or we've disqualified ourselves from God's help because of our own failures and regret. Regret can be corrosive to our relationship with God - it is like saying that he can't bring about a reversal for us- that our mistakes are beyond God's help.

DISCUSS IN PAIRS

Get into pairs and share:

1. A current circumstance that you are facing that needs God's help.
2. A situation that you struggle to have faith in God for, or a time when you have felt let down by God.

PRAY IN PAIRS

Pray for one another for renewed faith and hope and ask God's help for the circumstances that need his help.

