

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 14 2023

prayer power

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 55 and 58.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Elkanah had two wives. One was Peninnah; she bore lots of children. The other was Hannah; she had no children. Peninnah liked to mock Hannah and flaunt the fact that she had children and Hannah did not. But even though Hannah had no children, her husband still had a great love for her.

On a certain day, Hannah was sitting by the temple weeping. She was crying out to God and was in deep prayer because she desperately wanted a child. She vowed to God that if He were to grant her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord all the days of his life. And it was while she was in this deep prayer that Eli was sitting on a temple post observing her. He was the high priest. Thinking she was drunk, he rebuked her—telling her to put away her wine. But she responded to him saying that she had not drunk or eaten because she was of sorrowful spirit, and had just poured her heart out to God. So Eli said to her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him" (1 Samuel 1:17, KJV).

And it did come to pass that God granted Hannah a son, and she called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD" (verse 20, KJV). And she weaned the child until he was able to appear before the Lord. And when he was old enough, she gave him to live with Eli in the temple. It was a big sacrifice to give up her son, but she was thankful to God that He had granted her one. He had heard her prayer and fulfilled her request.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the power of prayer and the greatness of God's mercy and graciousness. *(Know)*
- Feel how much God loves them and that He really is listening when they pray. *(Feel)*
- Learn how to have a better prayer life and have more trust and faith in Jesus Christ. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Father, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 3: "God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to share how they feel about prayer. Ask them to share with everyone any experiences in which God has fulfilled their prayers and if He answered them in the way they expected or in a totally different way. Make sure they know that even if God

answers their prayers in ways they hadn't expected or hoped, they must still be thankful to God for listening to them and responding to their prayers. Read the Lord's Prayer with them in order for them to have a better understanding of how God wants us to pray. Then ask each student to try to apply what they've learned about prayer to their everyday lives.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Rowena had always been taught to pray, but she seldom did. She thought, *If something bad ever happens, I'll pray for God's help then.* But years went by, and her life continued in its normal way; nothing exciting or terrible happened, and she was content. Her father had just won a family vacation to Italy, and everyone was quite cheerful and happy.

Finally the day came when they left. On the drive to the airport Rowena's mother said, "Make sure you pray for a safe trip." Rowena shrugged it off, thinking, *What could possibly happen?*

It was an hour into the flight when things went drastically wrong. The Fasten Seatbelt sign suddenly lit up. She glanced out the window to see an engine smoking.

"The engine has caught on fire," said the pilot through the speakers. "We are turning around now to land."

Relieved that the pilot didn't sound too worried, Rowena shrugged everything off again. For a moment she thought about praying, but she knew nothing could possibly happen to them.

But she had been mistaken. That night on the news, family and friends watched as information was given about a jetliner crash.

This story is fiction, but the point is very true. And although it ends tragically, we also learn an important lesson from it. It is never the wrong time to pray. We must pray not only in bad situations, but at all times. As we get to know God, we come to trust Him, and then, when we pray it will be because we love Him and love talking to Him, not just to help us out of a bad situation.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes when we pray we feel that God isn't listening. We feel as if we're talking to a wall. But no matter how far away God seems to be, He is always listening to our prayers. God always answers prayers, and although we may not get what we want, He always gives us answers. In this story we will see God's amazing power and His love toward Hannah.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- What purpose might God have had to delay Hannah's childbearing?
- If Hannah could have looked back at the whole life of her special son, what might she have learned about God's timing? (Samuel was Israel's last judge and the best example of what a judge should be. He was also the first priest and prophet to serve under the rule of a king. He was born "right on time" to be at a very special place in Israel's history.)
- What are some reasons that you can think of for the polygamy practiced by some at this time in spite of God's clear intent for marriage found in Genesis 2:24? (Look in *Sharing Context and Background* below for some discussion starters.)
- At one point Hannah is so discouraged that she is physically ill. But on the way back home she has a different attitude (1 Samuel 1:18). What reversed her depression?

  (1) She prayed to God about exactly how she was feeling, 1 Samuel 1:11. (2) She received encouragement from another person, 1 Samuel 1:17. (3) She resolved to leave the problem with God, 1 Samuel 1:18. This is a good way to approach our own discouragement: pray honestly to God, leave the problem with Him, and rely on the support of godly friends.

Read Hannah's prayer together from 1 Samuel 2.

- What is the theme of Hannah's poetic prayer?
- In what ways does Mary's song (Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 remind you of Hannah's prayer? What do both say about God?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

- **Polygamy in Israel.** "In Israel, as in most of the ancient world, monogamy was generally

practiced. Polygamy was not contrary to law or morals, but was usually not economically feasible. The main occurrence of polygamy would be when the first wife was barren, but there are several other factors that encouraged the practice, including (1) an imbalance in the number of males and females, (2) the need to produce large numbers of children to work herds and/or fields, (3) the desire to increase the prestige and wealth of a household through multiple marriage contracts, and (4) the high rate of death for females in childbirth. Polygamy is most common among pastoral nomadic groups and in rural farming communities where it is important that every female be attached to a household and be productive. In the Bible most cases of polygamy among commoners occur prior to the period of the monarchy." —*Bible Background Commentary.**

"The Bible portrays polygamy, beginning with Lamech onward (Gen. 4:19), as an act of His creatures' stubbornness. God tolerated it, but it was not His will for their welfare. The pain of Abraham's life with Hagar (16:1-6), the spiritual calamities that Solomon's wives brought upon him (1 Kings 11:1-4), and the bitter results of David's harem arrangements are forceful reminders of the consequences of this deviation from God's will.

"In lands where polygamy is lawful, the Christian church often finds it difficult to apply the principle of monogamy. However, even in these countries, monogamy is upheld as the marital ideal."—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 728.

- **Shame of childlessness.** "Since bearing children was a sign of God's greatest blessing (Psalm 127:3), the inability to bear children was often viewed as a sign of God's punishment. Additionally, a woman's status in the family would be very tenuous if she had not borne children. A barren woman could be and often was discarded, ostracized, or given a lower status. Mesopotamian prayers and legal texts show that these same issues existed throughout the ancient Near East."—*Bible Background Commentary.*
- **Double portion for Hannah.** "The description of Hannah's portion is obscure in the Hebrew. Most translations identify it as a double portion (NIV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV), while other suggestions have been 'only one portion' (RSV) and 'special portion' (NLT). Many of the commentators favor 'only one portion' because that sets up the contrast that makes most sense of the context."—*Bible Background Commentary.*
- **Hannah's Song (1 Samuel 2:1-10).** "The actions of God were often seen as bringing reversal to the world. This reversal could be in terms of the created world (mountains reduced to dust, valleys lifted up, sun going dark); the social world (the poor receiving honor, as here, the mighty

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Patriarchs and Prophets. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Research

Help the students get involved with the lesson by asking some of them ahead of time to research the cultural setting of a particular Bible story. Some will enjoy this particular type of learning more than others, and they may come up with some interesting background that will bring the lesson to life for the entire class.

In today's world that often does not revolve around an agricultural society, some background about polygamy and childlessness in its cultural context might be helpful for understanding the issues in this lesson. Assign some of the more analytical students to bring information to share with the entire class. It will also give those students a chance to be the "authority" for a while instead of it always being the teacher.

being deposed); or the political world (empires tumbling). This world-upside-down motif was a way of expressing God's sovereign control. It could be used to convey judgment or reward and came to be connected with the future kingdom of God, where wrongs would be set right and a new order would take shape."—*Bible Background Commentary.*

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III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the students into small groups of three or four. Ask each group to make a list of three ways God might answer prayers in ways we don't expect. Share the lists with the whole group and encourage students to agree or disagree with what others wrote.

Ask if there is anyone who can report an unexpected answer to prayer that they or someone in their family has had.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Hannah had no children; her husband's other wife, Peninnah, had many. So Hannah prayed to God to grant her a child. She vowed to God that if He answered her prayer, she would give the child back to live the rest of his days for God. She prayed day in and day out unceasingly. She also fasted from food and drink. And in the temple, when Eli thought she was drunk, she responded that she was not, but she was of a sorrowful spirit. She told him of her prayer and her vow to God. Eli then blessed her and she went on her way. God granted Hannah a son, and she praised the Lord. And when the child was old enough, she sent him to live with Eli in the temple to serve God. We must remember that God gave Hannah what she asked for, but she also remembered to fulfill her vow to God. Prayer is having a conversation with God—talking to Him about everything and listening to His hopes and desires for our lives. We can tell Him about our feelings, our thoughts, our hopes, our dreams, our disappointments, and our fears. We can seek His guidance and will for our lives by listening to Him speak to our hearts. Prayer is time spent with God just as we would spend time talking with a friend.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 55 and 58.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11.
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prayer power



Photo by Terrill Thomas

keytext

"So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the LORD for him.' "

(1 Samuel 1:20, NIV)

flashlight

"Hannah's prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—'asked of God.' As soon as the little one was old enough to be separated from his mother, she fulfilled her vow. She loved her child with all the devotion of a mother's heart . . . but she had received him as a treasure consecrated to God, and she would not withhold from the Giver His own" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 570).

what do you think?

(T) True or (F) False:

____ You have been mocked for not having certain things that others have.
____ God answers your prayers every single time, although sometimes not in the way you expect.
____ God has spoken to you before. Even if it hasn't been a literal voice, you have heard His words in your heart.
____ You have prayed to the Lord that He would grant you something, and He has given you what you asked for.

did you know?

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.



INTO THE STORY

"There was a certain man from Ramathaim. . . . He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

"Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh. . . . 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. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. . . .

"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. In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. 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.'

"As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, 'How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.'

" '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. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.'

"Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.'

"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.

"Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the LORD for him.' "

(1 Samuel 1:1-5, 9-20, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why did Hannah want a child so badly?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What similarities exist between the covenant that Hannah makes with God concerning Samuel and the covenant Samson had with God (see last week's lesson)?

_____
_____
_____

Why did Eli think that Hannah was drunk when he found her in the temple?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If a priest or pastor today were to find someone much like Hannah in their church or temple, do you think they would have treated her the same way Eli did? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

In what way does this story demonstrate the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of prayer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Read through the story again and write down some of the most important points and the parts that you think mean the most to you.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again" **(Genesis 20:17, NIV).**

"Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, 'I will build a house for you.' So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you" **(2 Samuel 7:27, NIV).**

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full" **(Matthew 6:5, NIV).**

"But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God" **(Nehemiah 9:31, NIV).**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" **(Philippians 4:6, NIV).**

further insight

"Our prayers are not to be a selfish asking, merely for our own benefit. We are to ask that we may give."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 142.

"We are to look upon every duty, however humble, as sacred because it is a part of God's service. Our daily prayer should be, 'Lord, help me to do my best. Teach me how to do better work. Give me energy and cheerfulness. Help me to bring into my service the loving ministry of the Saviour.' "—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 474.

Sabbath

Read Matthew 6:5.

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked true or false questions about yourself. Most of them were about prayer. Do you think that prayer has the same effect on everybody? Do you think God answers everyone's prayers differently? God answered Hannah's prayer and gave her a child, but she also made a sacrifice by giving him back to God and letting him live in the tabernacle. Do you think you could give God something you cherished so much? Explain.

Try to see prayer in this perspective: if you had a friend who never gives of themselves to you, but expects you to give them your time, attention, and even things, how would that make you feel? It's the same with God. We can ask Him for things, but we must also thank Him and give of ourselves to Him in return.

Sunday

Read Philippians 4:6.

In *Into the Story* we see why Hannah experienced intense grief. She had birthed no children of her own, yet her husband's other wife, Peninnah, had birthed lots of children. This wounded Hannah and filled her with sorrow. In the *Out of the Story* section you were asked why Hannah wanted a child. It wasn't just because Peninnah had children, although that was part of it. She wanted something to love, and although she had the Lord and her husband, she ached for a child, and God granted her one.

Go to a concordance, look up the words "pray" and "prayer," and find other verses about prayers that were answered.

What can we learn from these stories of answered prayer?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 1:20.

Refer to this week's *Key Text.* Hannah named her baby Samuel because it meant that he was something she had asked God for. Think about your life. What is something you asked God for and received? Is it something to which you could give a special name? Naming her son Samuel was one way Hannah showed God how thankful she was for His grace. She also praised God by dedicating him to work for God all his life. Have you dedicated yourself to work for God? If so, how?

Tuesday

Read Nehemiah 9:31.

The *Flashlight* quote leads us to think about how difficult it must have been for Hannah to give up her son. He was a cherished gift from God, and Ellen White says that "she loved her child with all the devotion of a mother's heart." Imagine giving up someone you love because of your greater love for God. Samuel was a treasure to Hannah, yet she would not "withhold from the Giver His own."

What do you think you would have done in Hannah's position? How willing are you to make even small sacrifices because of your love for God?

Wednesday

In the *Punch Lines* are four verses about prayer and one about mercy. In what way can you connect them together?

Thursday

Read Matthew 6:6 and Mark 11:24.

What are some different ways that we can pray to God? Are there right and wrong ways of asking God for something? What should be our attitude if our prayer is answered to our liking? What should be our attitude if our prayer is not answered to our liking?

When God doesn't answer our prayer the way in which we want, He often sends blessings to "cushion" us through the disappointment. Think back to times when your prayer was not answered the way you hoped for. Can you think of other events that happened around that time that might have been God's "cushions"?

Friday

Read Ephesians 6:18.

If you fervently prayed to God for something for a long time, and He finally granted it to you but asked that you dedicate it to Him in return, how would you react? What would your heart want—to honor God or to cherish and use His gift the way you wanted to? In what areas in your life might this scenario apply? A friendship? A talent? What might it look like to dedicate something back to God?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 55 and 58.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.