

BIG WORD: 1 Samuel

Homework for Chapters 1-3
Discussion Dates: 25 January 2012 (in house)
and 26 January 2012 (online)

DAY ONE: Overview

PRAY for the Holy Spirit to clear your mind so that you may focus on God's Word without distractions or preconceptions. Ask Him to help you discern only what He wants for you in this reading and for this day.

READ: 1 Samuel 1-3

If possible, read all three chapters in one sitting. Make notes of any details that stick out to you, questions that rise and/or personal insights God gives you while you read.

DAY TWO: Hannah

- *1 Samuel 1:1—2:10*

What made Hannah different from other people of her day?

Consider her request to God. Would you call this bargaining with God or a conditional vow? What's the difference?

In our study of Judges, we discussed "fleecing" and how to determine the will of God. Compare Gideon (Judges 6--9) and Hannah's interactions with God. Do you see any parallels?

One conversation was started by God (Gideon) while the other was started by a human (Hannah). One received clear instructions from God while the other sought a clear answer from God. How, if at all, do these stories impact our understanding and methods of supplication?

Hannah's Song (2:1—10) is one of triumph and exaltation of the Lord. Some claim that Mary, the mother of Jesus, incorporated Hannah's Song into her Magnificat. Read Mary's Song in Luke 1:46—55, then compare the two. Do you see any similarities?

DAY THREE: Life's Not Fair

Life is definitely not fair. This is clearly evidenced in the story of Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah. Elkanah loves Hannah, which is obvious and likely hurtful to Peninnah, but he can't make her happy. Peninnah can have children, something that should have earned her favor in the eyes of her husband, but he still pines for Hannah. Hannah, who seems to have everything else, can't have a baby, through no fault of her own, and falls victim to cruel persecution by the other, jealous yet very fertile wife.

In Old Testament times, and even today in some cultures, marriage served a merely practical purpose, not a romantic commitment. Women, not allowed to work or own property, needed marriage for security. They needed protection and provision, both of which were assumed with a husband. Men needed marriage to provide a ready cook, housekeeper, baby factory and nanny. Wives provided status and children. Children provided more status. Children were also needed to lighten the workloads and enable profitable alliances, not to mention provide a lasting legacy.)

Clearly children were a most valuable contribution made by women. How do you think Peninnah felt about Hannah not "carrying her weight" in this way?

Infertility was frequently considered a punishment for spiritual impurity or unfaithfulness. How would this weigh on Hannah? Or on her husband, Elkanah?

It doesn't seem that Elkanah blames Hannah for her inability to conceive. What does that say about him, if anything?

It is possible Elkanah possesses a strong faith in God and trusts His sovereignty. It's also possible that he loves Hannah enough to overlook her "faults." Read 1:22—23. How do you interpret Elkanah's level of faith based on his statements here?

Scripture doesn't say anything more about Peninnah. What do you think happened to their family dynamics after Samuel was born? Or after Hannah continued to produce children? (Hannah had at least three more sons and two daughters after Samuel.)

DAY FOUR: Nazirite Vows & Ephods

Hannah promises God that, if given a child, she will raise him as a Nazirite from birth. Samson was also a Nazirite from birth. Let's review what those vows require.

- *Numbers 6:1—21*

Describe the regulations regarding ...

Hair:

Grapes & Alcohol:

Death:

Offerings:

Completions of the vow:

In the middle of chapter 2, we find an odd little interruption. The text takes us from Hannah's jubilation to Eli's son's desecration, then back to Hannah. Read 1 Samuel 2:18—21. Why do you think this is here?

Hannah yearly made a new robe for Samuel. This he wore under an ephod, which is a priestly apron of sorts. Read Exodus 28. What significance was there in

the ephod? Are there any parallels to the “garments” of born-again believers today? Can you think of any New Testament passages to support your thoughts?

DAY FIVE: Eli & His Sons

- *1 Samuel 2:12—36*
- *1 Samuel 3:11—18*

What were the sins of Eli's sons?

How did Eli respond to this?

God is a just God, yet it seems He places the responsibility fully on Eli, in spite of Eli's attempts to correct his sons. What do you think about this? Was it his fault? How much of a child's behavior should be blamed on the parents?

DAY SIX: Samuel's Call

- *1 Samuel 2:27—36*
- *1 Samuel 3:1—10*

God had already sent an unnamed man to Eli regarding the judgment of him and his sons. Why do you think He also sent a message of similar meaning to the child Samuel?

Why do you think it took Eli three times to recognize Who was speaking to Samuel?

How does God speak to us today? Is it possible you've received a message lately, but attributed it to the wrong speaker?

How can we attune our hearts and ears to God?

DAY SEVEN: Entering Priesthood

Some see a contradiction on Samuel's election to the priesthood. Priests had to come from the Levitical line, yet 1 Samuel 1:1 seems to put Samuel's family in the Ephraimite lineage. In 2 Chronicles 6, however, an Elkanah – the same name as Samuel's father – is listed in the lineage of Levi. Whether or not this is the same man, we don't know.

What we do know is that Samuel was accepted as an apprentice to Eli and that such an arrangement would have been difficult if Samuel was not a Levite. Of course, Samuel was never appointed as High Priest and, because of that, perhaps there were some opportunities for being grafted into the position.

Jesus was not a Levite. He was from the house and lineage of David, of the tribe of Judah. Read Hebrews 5:1—10 and 7:11—9:14.

What makes the priesthood of Jesus better than the Levitical priesthood?

Samuel is a type, a foreshadowing example, of the Messiah. He, perhaps grafted into the priestly line, serves as judge, priest, and prophet ... just as Jesus – who replaced the priesthood with His own, better priesthood – is Judge, High Priest and Prophet. Samuel ushered in the kingdom of Israel just as Jesus ushered in the Eternal Kingdom of God.

In just a few chapters we will study the installment of a kingdom for Israel. Much preparation went into this. The people had to be fully convinced of their depravity and need for a God-appointed leader. How is that similar to us today?

What preparations were made in your life before you were ready to claim God as your King?