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- › gain new knowledge about what the Bible teaches;
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- › internalize the Word in a way that transforms their lives.



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EXPLORE THE BIBLE: 1 Samuel

© 2016 LifeWay Press®

ISBN 978-1-4300-4316-4
Item 005756888

Dewey decimal classification: 222.43

Subject headings: BIBLE. O.T. 1 SAMUEL / BIBLE. O.T.—
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Printed in the United States of America

For ordering or inquiries visit www.lifeway.com; write to LifeWay Small Groups; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152; or call toll free 800.458.2772.

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Session 1 quotation: Martin Luther, as quoted in E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* [online, cited 14 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: www.ccel.org.
Session 2 quotation: Charles Spurgeon, as quoted in Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty Press, 1967), 115. Session 3 quotation: C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 26. Session 4 quotation: J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, vol. 1, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1966).
Session 5 quotation: Mark Twain, *BrainyQuote* [online, cited 25 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: www.brainyquote.com.
Session 6 quotation: Jackie Robinson, as quoted in Mark Newman, "1947: A Time for Change," *MLB News* [online], 13 April 2007 [cited 14 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: <http://m.mlb.com/news/article/1895445/>.

▶ ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Bible is an amazing gift from our awesome God. In it He reveals Himself and His glory for us to witness. I'm excited that you're joining this journey through the Book of 1 Samuel. It's truly epic and beautiful in its scope and message.

In 1 Samuel we see the story of God's people. As we do, we see the greatness of our God over His people. He's worthy. He's holy. He's the God above all gods, the King above all kings. As your group discusses this book, I want to encourage you to see the overarching theme of God's greatness as the umbrella that encompasses each story.

So many times life takes its toll on us, and we're prone to take our eyes off God and His great sufficiency for us. Therefore, your discussions and emphasis on God's greatness and the victories He wins for His people will be a great reminder and encouragement. In 1 Samuel God's greatness will be a constant background as you discuss stories of deliverance, victory, forgiveness, and worship.

As you study the passages in their context and seek to obey them in your context, I know the Lord will encourage you and challenge you. Enjoy the journey through 1 Samuel. Our God is still great, still cares for His people, and is still the King above all kings.

The *Explore the Bible* series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT: This page explains the original context of each passage and begins relating the primary themes to your life today.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: These pages walk you through Scripture, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

OBEY THE TEXT: This page helps you apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

LEADER GUIDE: This final section provides optional discussion starters and suggested questions to help anyone lead a group in reviewing each section of the personal study.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit:
www.ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible.

➤ GROUP COMMITMENT

As you begin this study, it's important that everyone agrees to key group values. Clearly establishing the purpose of your time together will foster healthy expectations and help ease any uncertainties. The goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience leading to spiritual growth and true community. Initial each value as you discuss the following with your group.

PRIORITY

Life is busy, but we value this time with one another and with God's Word. We choose to make being together a priority.

PARTICIPATION

We're a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.

RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions. All questions are encouraged and respected.

TRUST

Each person humbly seeks truth through time in prayer and in the Bible. We trust God as the loving authority in our lives.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the group without the permission of everyone involved. This commitment is vital in creating an environment of trust and openness.

SUPPORT

Everyone can count on anyone in this group. Permission is given to call on one another at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group provides care for every member.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in the loving ways we decide on. Questions are always welcome. Unsolicited advice, however, isn't permitted.

I agree to all the commitments.

Date

➤ GENERAL EDITOR



Eric Geiger serves as the vice president of the Resources Division at LifeWay Christian Resources. Eric received his doctorate in leadership and church ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has authored and coauthored several books, including *Creature of the Word* and the best-selling church-leadership book *Simple Church*.

Eric also serves as the senior pastor of ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee. Eric is married to Kaye, and they have two daughters, Eden and Evie.



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ANSWERED

God answers the prayers of those who humbly seek Him.



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➤ ABOUT 1 SAMUEL

AUTHOR

The human writer of 1 Samuel isn't mentioned in Scripture, though it bears the name of the prophet who was the bridge between the time of the judges and the beginning of the monarchy in Israel. Although Jewish tradition attributes the book to Samuel himself, this is unlikely because the events described extended past the life of the prophet. First Chronicles 29:29-30, however, mentions a historical collection that appears to have been written by Samuel, so it's safe to assume that the writer of 1 Samuel used this resource and possibly the writings of the prophets Nathan and Gad.

DATE

Two questions emerge in any discussion about the chronology of 1 Samuel. First, at what time did the events in the book occur? It's fairly certain that they took place from 1105 to 1010 B.C.

Second, when were the events of 1 Samuel actually written in the historical narrative we know today? Most conservative scholars believe the book was written sometime either during King Solomon's reign (around 950 B.C.) or perhaps after the kingdom divided in 931 B.C. The reference to the kings of Judah in 1 Samuel 27:6 could possibly indicate the latter date.

PURPOSE

First and Second Samuel were originally one document in the Hebrew Bible. This fact no doubt informs any attempt to understand the writer's purpose. Both books provide accounts of the emergence of kingship and the history of the kingdom of God in Israel. The narrative is built around three major characters: Samuel, Saul, and David.

A study of 1 Samuel will reveal the primacy of God's glory. While the lives of some characters (Samuel and David) reflected His greatness and goodness, others (Eli, his sons, and Saul) made a mockery of God and defamed Him by their actions. These lessons will lead us to confront the call to exalt God alone.

"I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO
THAT I SHALL SPEND
THE FIRST THREE
HOURS IN PRAYER."
—Martin Luther

➤ 1 SAMUEL 1:10-18,26-28

Think About It

Note all of Hannah's self-descriptors in this Bible passage.

How did she define herself in relation to Eli the priest?

In verses 10-16 identify the emotions Hannah experienced.

10 Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept with many tears. **11** Making a vow, she pleaded, “Lord of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant’s affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut.” **12** While she continued praying in the Lord’s presence, Eli watched her lips. **13** Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk **14** and scolded her, “How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!” **15** “No, my lord,” Hannah replied. “I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven’t had any wine or beer; I’ve been pouring out my heart before the Lord. **16** Don’t think of me as a wicked woman; I’ve been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment.” **17** Eli responded, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you’ve requested from Him.” **18** “May your servant find favor with you,” she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

26 “Please, my lord,” she said, “as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. **27** I prayed for this boy, and since the Lord gave me what I asked Him for, **28** I now give the boy to the Lord. For as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord.” Then he bowed in worship to the Lord there.

► UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

Change was in the air during the time of the events recorded in 1 Samuel. The priesthood had grown corrupt. Neither Eli nor his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, served the Lord in a way that honored Him. God, therefore, would bring an end to Eli's priestly dynasty (see 1 Sam. 2:12-36). It also was a time of transition in government from a theocracy (the rule of God) to a monarchy (the rule of a king). Samuel, the child born through God's intervention, would be a stabilizing force during these days of upheaval and transition. Samuel would anoint the first two kings of Israel but to different outcomes. The first king, Saul, proved unfit for the office. Therefore, God would call out the young shepherd David to lead His people.

It would be a mistake to assume that everything in Israel rose and fell because of the people in positions of power. In the opening chapter of the book, we meet an ordinary woman in great distress who prayed to God. Hannah played a key role in the unfolding of God's plan and purpose for Israel. She was one of two wives of Elkanah, a man of the tribe of Ephraim, and she was unable to have a child. This is a traumatic situation in any era or culture but especially so in ancient Israel, where children were viewed as evidence of God's blessing and favor. Hannah prayed for a child, and God heard and answered her. The child born to Hannah was Samuel. In gratitude Hannah gave the child back to the Lord because she loved the Giver more than the gift. Her prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 is a triumphant celebration of the power of God to overturn human designs and anticipates the emergence of kings in Israel (see v. 10).





➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

HANNAH'S PRAYER (1 Samuel 1:10-11)

¹⁰Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears.
¹¹Making a vow, she pleaded, “LORD of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant’s affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut.”

As a part of their normal practice, Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, went to Shiloh, the place of worship in Israel, to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. With the taunts of her rival, Peninnah (Elkanah’s other wife), about her barrenness ringing in her ears (see vv. 6-7), Hannah went to the Lord’s tabernacle, where Eli the priest was serving. A literal description of the state of Hannah’s heart in verse 10 is “bitter of soul.” The phrase is repeated in 22:2 to describe those who, because of desperation in their lives, rallied around David as king. The purest prayer comes from desperate devotion and a believing heart that can find relief and help only from God. In His compassion the Father takes notice of all our grief and sorrow.

Why is it important to be honest with God about our pains and frustrations?

As Hannah prayed, she made a vow to the Lord. This raises the question of whether it’s advisable to promise God to do a certain thing in response to His answering a prayer. Our relationship with God is based on grace. We can’t earn His favor or

benefits. In Hannah we see the heart attitude to which God favorably responds. In the original language she called herself a servant or slave to the Lord. A deep understanding of the Lord's greatness and of our position in relation to Him drives and motivates prayer. Thus, prayer isn't a means to secure what we want for ourselves but rather a submission of everything in our lives to His control.

In asking the Lord to remember her, Hannah wasn't seeking to jog the memory of God. Rather, she was asking Him to act in her behalf. In return, Hannah's promise to God was that her son would be a lifelong Nazirite (see Num. 6:1-7). Unlike the Levitical priests, who served from age 25 to 50 (see 8:23-26), this boy would forever be in the service of the Lord.

What role does submission play in prayer? How are humility and submission to God related?

ELI'S AFFIRMATION (1 Samuel 1:12-18)

¹²While she continued praying in the LORD's presence, Eli watched her lips. ¹³Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴and scolded her, "How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!"

Though Eli was likely past the age of service for serving as a priest, he was monitoring activity in the tabernacle (see v. 9). As he observed Hannah's praying, he mistook fervency in whispered prayer as something irreverent and concluded that she was intoxicated. Perhaps the type of praying demonstrated by Hannah was uncharacteristic of that time, and Eli wasn't accustomed to seeing prayer practiced that way. Eli accused Hannah of being drunk and scolded her to sober up. Perhaps he'd witnessed such abuses in the tabernacle in the past, but he completely misread this woman. He could watch her lips, but he couldn't see into her heart.

¹⁵"No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven't had any wine or beer; I've been pouring out my heart before the Lord. ¹⁶Don't think of me as a wicked woman; I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment."

KEY DOCTRINE

Stewardship

Christians should recognize their time, talents, and material possessions as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.

BIBLE SKILL

Compare passages with related themes.

Compare 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Luke 1:46-55.

At what points are the two songs similar?

How are they different?

What conclusions can be drawn about God from these two songs?

Hannah replied to this rebuke with humility. She was even willing to subject herself to a priest whose discernment could be questioned. Perhaps the greatest test of our servanthood comes in our relationships with others. Serving the Lord is one thing, but being willing to humble ourselves before other people is something else.

¹⁷Eli responded, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you’ve requested from Him.” ¹⁸“May your servant find favor with you,” she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

Eli realized that he had misread Hannah. He blessed and encouraged her with a priestly benediction after recognizing God was at work in that moment. The point isn’t that our prayers should impress others to the point that we receive validation from them. We should pray sincerely and trust that God will affirm our petitions, whether through human encouragement or inner confirmation by the Holy Spirit based on His Word.

Hannah’s response to Eli again revealed her humility. The word translated *favor* (see v. 18) also can mean *grace* (KJV) and describes undeserved favor. With respect to God, grace is His unmerited favor that He extends to sinners when they repent and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ (see Eph. 2:8-9).

Notice the difference in Hannah’s attitude and demeanor as she left the place of prayer. Though her circumstances hadn’t changed, after prayer she was transformed. Prayer does that for us as well. When we get up off our knees, confident that God has heard us and will act according to His will, we can reengage life with a new attitude.

***On what basis can we know that God has heard our prayer?
What promises can we claim from Scripture?***

HANNAH’S PRESENTATION (1 Samuel 1:26-28)

²⁶“Please, my lord,” she said, “as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD.”

After her encounter with Eli in the tabernacle, Hannah went home to Ramah with her husband. God answered her prayer, and she bore a son whom she named Samuel, which meant *name of God*. His name indicated the divine intervention that came through his mother's prayer (see vv. 19-20). After Samuel was weaned (usually around age 3), Hannah took the child to the annual sacrifice to dedicate Samuel to the Lord permanently (see vv. 21-22). Elkanah had the prerogative under the law to overrule her vow (see Num. 30:10-15), but he did not do so. Instead, Elkanah affirmed her plan, no doubt indicating his own devotion to the Lord (see 1 Sam. 1:23). Hannah reminded Eli of their previous encounter in which she prayed to the Lord while standing beside him, lost in communion with God.

²⁷“I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked Him for, ²⁸I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.” Then he bowed in worship to the LORD there.

God gave Hannah a child, and she gave the child back to God. Though she would later bear other children with God's help (see 2:21), Samuel would remain at the tabernacle in service to the Lord. Only those who know the Lord through meaningful prayer attain to the deepest commitments.

How does seeing an answered prayer encourage the person who prayed? How does it encourage others who were aware of the prayer?



► OBEY THE TEXT

We can approach God with our frustrations and heartfelt desires, knowing we can trust Him to do what's best. We encourage others by praying with them in agreement, sympathizing with their heartaches. God is praised when we recognize that all we have and are come from Him.

Describe your greatest disappointment in life at this moment. Take time to pray about this issue, following the example set by Hannah.

Discuss with the group how prayer with others can be a source of encouragement. Identify actions the group can take this week to encourage one another through prayer. Record prayer needs and put into practice the actions identified.

List ways God has answered your prayers in the past. With whom can you share this list as an act of worship and thanksgiving to God?



MEMORIZE

“Hannah prayed: My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted up by the LORD. My mouth boasts over my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.”
1 Samuel 2:1

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED TO MAKE OBSERVATIONS AND RECORD PRAYER REQUESTS DURING THE GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SESSION.

MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.



➤ GETTING STARTED

OPENING OPTIONS: Choose one of the following to open the group discussion.

WEEKLY QUOTATION DISCUSSION STARTER: “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”—Martin Luther

- › What’s your initial response to this week’s quotation?
- › What steps do you take to bring order to your day and to identify priorities?
- › Today we’ll see that making prayer a priority enables us to focus on God’s ability to accomplish what’s beyond our own abilities.

CREATIVE ACTIVITY: Before the group meets, get a three-pack can of tennis balls. With all the balls in the can, carefully pour uncooked rice into the can, filling the space between the tennis balls until the can is full. Then pour the rice back into a separate container. When the group arrives, use the following demonstration and questions.

- › This empty can represents the amount of time we have. The tennis balls represent priorities like worship, community, and prayer. The rice represents our other obligations and activities.
- › Ask people to provide examples of typical activities in their lives, such as work, family, and exercise. Pour rice into the empty can with each answer until all the rice is in the can.
- › Place the three tennis balls on top of the rice, revealing that they won’t all fit and that something important will be left out.
- › Remove everything from the can and then place the tennis balls in the empty can first. Now pour the rice into the can, revealing that everything now fits into the same space.
- › Today we’ll see that prioritizing prayer, worship, and godly community allows us to see God do things that are otherwise impossible.

➤ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVIDE BACKGROUND: Briefly introduce members to 1 Samuel, pointing out the major themes and any information that will help them understand 1 Samuel 1:10-18,26-28 (see pp. 7 and 9). Then, to help people personally connect today’s context with the original context, use the following questions and statements.

- › About what kinds of things do you most often pray?
- › Why is prayer vital to a person’s relationship with God?
- › The Book of 1 Samuel opens with the prayers of a woman named Hannah.

➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ THE BIBLE: Ask two volunteers to read 1 Samuel 1:10-18,26-28.

DISCUSS: Use the following questions to discuss group members' initial reactions to the text.

- › Why might it be significant that the Book of 1 Samuel opens with a story of prayer and provision?
- › How does the text describe Hannah's emotions? What does this passage reveal about emotional honesty in our spiritual lives?
- › How does specific prayer function in this story? Godly counsel? Worship?
- › How did Eli respond before understanding the situation? After understanding? After God answered?
- › What can we conclude from the change in Hannah's behavior after her prayer but before God's answer?
- › What else does this text teach us about God? Ourselves?
- › What other questions or observations do you have?

NOTE: Provide ample time for group members to share responses and questions about the text. Don't feel pressured to prioritize the printed agenda over group members' personal experiences. If time allows, discuss responses to the questions in the personal reading.

➤ OBEY THE TEXT

RESPOND: Foster an environment of openness and action. Help individuals apply biblical truth to specific areas of personal thought, attitude, and/or behavior.

- › Are you ever afraid to make specific requests in prayer? Why or why not?
- › Who can share a story of God's answering a specific prayer immediately or over time?
- › How do today's study and the stories just shared encourage you?
- › What will you do to start prioritizing prayer as a regular part of your week?
- › How can we pray for one another now and throughout the week?

PRAY: Close by praying for group members to desire and rely on daily time in prayer. Ask God to work on behalf of any requests shared. Thank God that He hears us and answers our prayers in His timing.