

November 28, 2012

Hannah and Samuel

1 Samuel 1

LESSON FOCUS*Love one another.* John 13:34*Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.* Psalm 54:2 (NIV)**Today's Bible Lesson:**

Samuel's story begins in the hill country of Ephraim (EE-fray-m) at a place called Ramathaim (RAY-mah-THAY-m), near Shiloh. For about 300 years the Old Testament tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, so it became the worship center for Israel prior to Jerusalem (1 Sam. 1:3, 24; 4:3).

When one compares Zephaniah 1:1 with 1 Samuel 1:1, one can see that each verse traces the man being talked about back for four generations ("the son of" so-and-so is found four times). For Jewish people, family roots were very important.

Samuel's father, Elkanah, had two wives, which was common in early Bible times. In those days polygamy was tolerated under the law of Moses (Deut. 21:15-17). However, it was not God's original intention, for as Jesus taught, it could cause great misery (Matt. 19:3-8).

The names of Elkanah's wives were Hannah and Peninnah. In the Bible, names often mean something special. The name "Hannah" means "grace." In 1 Samuel 2:1-10 Hannah praises God for how He has "graced" her with His favor.

Hannah had been childless—a tragedy for women of that day. Because children are a blessing from God, the absence of children was sometimes considered a punishment for sin. Peninnah may have suggested this and used it to hurt Hannah.

Bible-time Jewish men were required by law (Deut. 16:16) to attend three sacred festivals annually ("year after year;" 1 Sam. 1:7). The three required annual feasts were Passover (or Unleavened Bread), Pentecost (or Weeks), and Tabernacles (or Booths).

While attending a feast in Shiloh, the religious center of the nation at that time, Hannah left the feasting to pray at the tabernacle. She told God of her anguish over her childlessness. Hannah vowed that she would dedicate her child to the Lord's service (1 Sam. 1:11). Then she prayed, "May your servant find favor in your eyes" (vs. 18).

The priest, Eli, observed Hannah moving her lips without sound and reprimanded her for being drunk at the tabernacle. Hannah explained that she was not drunk but was praying because of her sorrow. When Hannah told him of her longing, she received his blessing.

Hannah conceived and a son was born. Hannah named her son Samuel, which means "asked of God" (vs. 20). Samuel was a special gift from God—not only for his parents, but also for all of Israel. Samuel served as a prophet and anointed Saul as king, then David.

BIBLE STORY

Hannah and Samuel

1 Samuel 1

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use visuals to help tell the story.

Love one another. John 13:34

Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. Psalm 54:2 (NIV)

This story is about a woman named Hannah who really wanted to have a child. Every year she would go with her husband to a place called Shiloh.

While they were there, there would be a big festival and everyone would celebrate all that God did for them. They would thank God for their crops and everything God gave them, and give sacrifices or presents to God to show how thankful they were.

This sometimes made Hannah very sad because she wanted so badly to be thankful, but was discouraged because she couldn't have a child. That didn't mean Hannah moped around and felt sorry for herself but in her heart she was very sad. Her husband still loved her very much and tried to make her feel better but nothing seemed to work.

Finally Hannah did the only thing she knew that she could do to help her situation. One evening when they had finished eating and drinking Hannah went to the temple and began to pray.

When Hannah prayed she was very honest with how she was feeling. She sometimes cried a lot and probably felt like God had forgotten her. But while she was praying she promised God, "Dear God, if you would only look and see how sad I am and remember me, please give me a son. If you would do that for me I will dedicate my son to you for his whole life."

As Hannah was praying there was a man named Eli, a priest, who was sitting nearby and saw her. While Hannah was praying she was praying to herself, her lips were moving but Eli couldn't hear her say anything.

Eli realized that Hannah was being very honest and truthful with God and he said to her, "Go in peace and may God answer your prayer." After that Hannah left she felt much better because she had talked to God about what bothered her.

A great thing happened, God remembered Hannah (because God doesn't forget any of us) and gave her a son, and she named him Samuel.

Hannah had waited so long for this child and she loved him so much, but she remembered that she made a promise to God. Hannah was an honest woman and when she made a promise she meant it. Hannah kept her promise.

When Samuel was old enough she went back to the place where she had prayed and said to Eli the priest, "Do you remember me? I am the woman that cried and prayed for this child and He answered my prayer. Now I give him to the Lord and I will leave him with you to learn and work with you."

So Samuel lived with Eli and every year Hannah would pack her suitcase and visit him and bring him new clothes. It might have been hard for Hannah to see Samuel only once a year but she wanted to keep her promise. God blessed Hannah again and gave her and her husband even more sons and daughters.

Samuel did very well while staying with Eli. Then one night something unusual happened. Eli and Samuel had both gone to bed and were having a nice sleep. When Samuel all of a sudden woke up, someone was calling him, "Samuel."

Well, Samuel thought it was Eli so he ran to his bed and answered, "Here I am; you called me?" But Eli said, "I did not call you; go back and lie down."

So Samuel went back to his bed. He didn't know this, but God was calling him. Just as Samuel got settled God said, "Samuel!" And Samuel jumped up and went back to Eli and said, "Here I am, you called?"

Again Eli answered, "No I didn't call you; go back to bed."

The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli again and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Eli couldn't figure out what was going on. He had been thinking who could be calling Samuel, they were the only ones there. Suddenly Eli realized there was only one other explanation so Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if you hear the voice again, say, 'Yes, Lord, I'm listening.'"

Sure enough, Samuel went to lie down and the Lord called again, "Samuel! Samuel!" So Samuel quickly replied, "Speak Lord, I am listening."

From then on Samuel knew when God wanted to talk to him and he always listened. God blessed Samuel and he grew up to be a great prophet or spokesperson of the Lord.

Father, we praise you because you are such a wonderful God. You have a plan for our lives and you want us to be happy. Help us to trust you and wait patiently for answers to our prayers. Amen

BIBLE CHALLENGE

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn this verse.

Love one another. John 13:34

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Look and Listen (Samuel Listens to God)

This game will help students discover the value of careful listening as they work together and explore the story of Samuel hearing God.

You'll Need:

A button or other small object
CD Player & CD

The Game:

Before you begin, hide the small object in your room. ***Say: I've hidden a small object in the room, and your job is to find it. It won't be easy, and you may need clues. You must listen carefully in order to hear the clues. Music will be playing during the search.***

Divide students into pairs or small teams for the search and encourage them to cooperate in the task.

Give general – not specific – clues. For example, if the small object is near the clock you might say, ***"I've got to hand it to you, you're good searchers!"***

Provide students with a goal. You might say, ***"Our goal is to find the small object with 3 clues!"*** Play until the object is found. Celebrate when it is found!

Ask:

How did the noise affect your ability to hear the clues?

How did you overcome the noise?

How did Samuel know when God was speaking to him?

How can we learn to hear God's voice?

God speaks to people in quiet and creative ways. When we tune out earthly noise, it's easier to hear God's voice.

GAME

Here I Am

You'll Need

Blindfolds

The Game

Play this game like Marco Polo.

Ask one student to stand on one side of the playing area. Blindfold that student before proceeding to the other students.

Ask another student to stand on the other side of the playing area (opposite the blindfolded player). This student will call "***Samuel***" to the blindfolded student.

The other students quietly position themselves at random around the playing area. When they hear "Samuel", they will answer with "***Here I Am!***"

Blindfolded student moves toward students answering "***Here I Am!***", when one is tagged a new blindfolded student wanders trying to tag a student.

Ask:

What are ways we can listen to God and find out what He wants us to do? (Read the Bible, listen to Bible stories, Pray, talk with adults who know and love God)

SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

Experiment 1: Stereo Hangers – tune out other noise to listen to the sound!

You'll Need:

4 Wire hangers
Cotton string – approximately 3 feet per hanger

What You'll Do:

Strike the hanger on the table lightly. What do you hear?

This time.....

Loop the string over the top of the hanger. Hold the ends of the string, one in each hand, loop each end around finger. Put fingers in ears and lightly strike the hanger on a table or other surface. Listen for the twinkling noise.

Say:

Samuel had to listen for who was calling him. He was certain it was Eli the priest. When Eli realized it was God, he told Samuel to go back to bed and listen again. This time he as to ask God if it was him speaking to him.

We too need to listen for God's voice. He speaks to us all the time, we just need to listen. Just like it was difficult to hear the hanger's twinkle without the string in our ears, so it is with God's still small voice, sometimes we need to close out all of the other noise to hear Him speak.

Speak Lord, your servant is listening!

Experiment 2: Clapping? Where? - There's nothing like a round of applause!

Use your ears to figure out where a sound is coming from.

You'll Need

Nothing!

What You'll Do

You need: one person to be the guesser, and the rest to be clappers.

The guesser closes his eyes and stands in the center of a circle of clappers.

One clapper claps and the guesser points to where he thinks the sound is coming from.

Now do the same thing again - but this time, the guesser closes his eyes AND covers one ear.

Make sure everybody gets a chance to be the guesser. Guessers get five guesses per round. When everyone has had a turn, compare your results. Are there more right answers with both ears listening or with one ear covered? Why do you think there is or isn't a difference?

Say:

Ready to hear the sci scoop? When you hear a sound, your brain uses the information from your ears to figure out where the sound is coming from. If your left ear catches sound before your right ear, your brain knows that the sound is coming from your left. But if one ear is covered, your brain doesn't have as much information, so it's harder to tell where a sound is coming from. Your head might also block the sound to your ears. For example, if a sound was coming from the right it might sound differently to the left ear because your head is in the way.

To make it harder, try clapping above your head or down near the ground. Or try standing in a line instead of a circle.