

Underdogs

“Hannah’s Baby Boy”

1 Samuel 1

Small Group Plan

It’s hard, very hard, for Christians who are used to instant pudding, instant credit, and instant replay to wait for anything ... even God.

— From *The God Who Hears* by W. Bingham Hunter

Waiting. Waiting for answers. Waiting for help. Waiting to hear from God. We are not very good at waiting. Especially if our waiting is mixed with pain. How easy is it for you to ...

- ... live with unfulfilled dreams tucked in your heart?*
- ... remain committed while waiting for clarity?*
- ... change yourself before changing your circumstance?*
- ... live with pain of a constant desire?*
- ... put your dreams into God’s hands?*

This describes the life of Hannah. But she learned to wait and her faithfulness speaks loudly to our impatient world today.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Describe our culture’s inability to “wait” — what does it look like?
- How is this impatience damaging to both community and individuality?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— HANNAH’S PAIN —

1 Samuel 1:1-8

¹ There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. ⁴ 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. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.

⁶ Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

- When Elkanah gave a double portion to Hannah, do you think it did very much to help to ease her pain? Explain.
- Why was her grief so intense at the annual sacrifices?
- Why did Peninnah provoke Hannah and irritate her?
- How would you describe the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of this ordeal on Hannah (vs. 7-8)?
- How does this story illustrate the problems with polygamy?

— HANNAH'S PRAYER —

1 Samuel 1:9-20

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ 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." ¹² As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine." ¹⁵ "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. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." ¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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."

- What does Hannah's prayer tell us about her despondency (v. 11)?
- Why did Hannah make her vow to God, and was God waiting on her vow before he changed her situation? Explain.

- Does Eli respond to Hannah because he had misjudged her or because he felt her pain (vs. 13-17)? Explain.
- How would you describe the trust that shines in Hannah’s life — “no longer downcast” (v. 18)?

— HANNAH’S PROMISE —

1 Samuel 1:21-28

²¹When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, ²²Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always.” ²³“Do what seems best to you,” her husband Elkanah told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. ²⁴After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. ²⁵When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, ²⁶and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. ²⁷I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.

- What do you see in Elkanah’s words to his wife Hannah, “Do what seems best to you” (v. 23)? What does this say about their relationship?
- Why would it have been difficult for Hannah to fulfill her vow?
- Hannah’s son became the great prophet Samuel. How does her experience encourage us to persevere in prayer?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Have you ever felt like you were trapped in a hopeless situation? Explain.
- Why did God allow Hannah, and sometimes one of us, to reach such a point of desperation?
- When have you seen God completely turn around a seemingly hopeless situation, making it into something good?
- How do you usually respond to God when he says “no” or “wait” when there is something you want?
- What is the most reassuring part of this story to you?
- Close in prayer asking God to teach us to wait on his timing.