

Preview of 1 Samuel

The books of Samuel and Kings were originally known as the Books of the Kingdom. In our Bibles today, the subtitle of 1 Samuel appears as The First Book of the Kings.

We do not know when 1 Samuel was written or who wrote this inspired record. Many believe that Samuel wrote the history of the events preceding his retirement from public service. Since he was reared at Shiloh, where the ark rested, Samuel likely would have added to the records preserved with the ark. Obviously, however, he did not write the history that occurred after his death. Perhaps 1 Chronicles 29:29 holds a clue to this question: "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer."

The Book of 1 Samuel covers about one hundred years, bridging the era of the judges with that of the kings. Samuel himself was the last of the judges and the first of a long line of messengers who prophesied orally. Nathan, Gad, Elijah, and Elisha were among these prophets, whose personal writings, if they produced any, are not included in the Scriptures. These men may, however, have left written material from which the history of Israel's kings was compiled.

Although Saul is king throughout much of the narrative of 1 Samuel, very little of his forty years of rule is actually recorded. This history focuses rather on the affairs leading to the reign of David, which is covered in both 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. The experience of David, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came, is typical of a glorious era that was yet future. Thus we see divine revelation moving forward in the history recorded in 1 Samuel.

Through the godly ministry of Samuel, through the vacillation and ultimate debauchery of King Saul, and through the grueling preparation of David, we see God as the great Sovereign, preserving the people through whom would come the long-promised Messiah. May that thought inspire us to faith and loyalty to His cause in our day.

Lesson 9 25 March 2012

The Home of Elkanah and Hannah

Lesson Scope: 1 Samuel 1 and 2

Lesson Focus

Israel's judges had failed to bring permanent deliverance from their enemies. Samuel was likely born just before or during Samson's time of fame and failure. Israel's priests had also failed to the degree that people abhorred the offering of the Lord (2:17). In the midst of this, Elkanah and Hannah related to God as the "LORD of hosts" (1:3, 11). They viewed Him as the sovereign Lord who remained in control regardless of how dark earthly circumstances seemed.

Elkanah was a Levite, belonging to the priestly family of the Kohathites. Samuel thus qualified for the priesthood. But Hannah's vision for Samuel went beyond that. She committed him to special separation unto God as a lifelong Nazarite.

As prophet, priest, and the last of the judges, Samuel helped the people to experience a measure of revival. Near the close of his life, he presided over Israel's transition from theocracy to monarchy.

God seeks strongholds of faith in every generation. Godly homes fill a vital role in molding lives for His service and influencing the world with His truth.

The sun will not always be at our backs, nor does God intend that it should be. He knows that adversity will stir us to greater effort. He sends us wind so that we may lean into it. He delays answering our prayers so that we pray more fervently and search our souls more deeply. He lets evil confront us so that our lights shine more brightly. He allows us to fear for our children so that we more zealously teach and direct them.

Lesson Aim: To portray parental qualities that are essential for reproducing the faith.

Theme Verse: [Genesis 18:19](#). For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Lesson Text:

Diligent in Worship

[1 Samuel 1:1-3](#) ¹ Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: ² And he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. ³ And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there.

Patient in Faith

[1 Samuel 1:9-18](#) ⁹ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰ And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. ¹¹ And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. ¹² And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. ¹⁴ And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. ¹⁵ And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. ¹⁷ Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him. ¹⁸ And she said, Let

thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more *sad*.

Unreserved in Commitment

1 Samuel 1:26-28 ²⁶ And she said, Oh my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. ²⁷ For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: ²⁸ Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

1 Samuel 2:11, 18-20, 26 ¹¹ And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest..... ¹⁸ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *being* a child, girded with a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought *it* to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home..... ²⁶ And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

Questions for Study

Diligent in Worship

1. How were the circumstances of Elkanah and Hannah's worship different from ours? How were they similar?
2. What do we find to admire in Elkanah and Hannah's worship?
3. What personal and family practices today give evidence that we are placing priority on worship?

Patient in Faith

4. Did Hannah's prayer go beyond bargaining with God? Explain.
5. What do you think Hannah's God would most like to teach us about our own prayer habits?
6. How will praying for and with our children affect our attitudes toward them?

Unreserved in Commitment

7. What did Hannah's commitment and faithful fulfillment of it do for Samuel?
8. How does Hannah's attitude toward Eli challenge us?

9. How do our responsibilities toward our children change as they grow?

Analyzing the Passage

"Hannah had no children" (1 Samuel 1:2). In Elkanah and Hannah's time, barrenness brought great reproach and was often viewed as a punishment from God. Even Hannah's husband did not fully understand. God's delay in granting Hannah's desire to have children enlarged her vision and strengthened her commitment.

Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:3) was Israel's place of worship, where Joshua had set up the tabernacle. Later Scriptures (Psalm 78:60, 61; Jeremiah 7:12, 14) suggest that it was destroyed. It faded from view after the capture of the ark by the Philistines.

Principles and Applications

Diligent in Worship

1. Godly parents make worship a priority (1 Samuel 1:3). Even though we may allow a degree of flexibility in our home worship schedule, our children should see us laying aside other interests on a regular basis, cheerfully and naturally taking time to maintain our relationship with the Lord.

Local church services also deserve their share of our time and interest. As far as possible, we should come to services prepared in mind and rested in body so that our worship is acceptable to God and satisfying to us.

2. The godly continue doing right despite evil surroundings (1 Samuel 1:3). Earthly surroundings have been and will be evil until Christ returns. We face challenges similar to those of Elkanah and Hannah. God expects us to face into the wind of bad influences, imperfect leadership, the tendencies of our own fallen nature, and more.

"Be strong! / Say not, 'The days are evil. Who's to blame?' / And fold the hands and acquiesce—oh, shame! / Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's Name." —Maltbie D. Babcock

Patient in Faith

3. The righteous take their burdens to the Lord in prayer (1 Samuel 1:10). "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" (Psalm 94:9). It is an enormous relief to confide in One who has a keen and kindly ear and a fatherly heart. He will take care of things in His own way, considering not only His purposes for us as individuals, but also His far-reaching purposes for all of His children. "Leave to thy God to order and provide; / In every change He

faithful will remain."

4. God-fearing couples desire children (1 Samuel 1:11). Despite the inconvenience, expense, and even heartache that children may bring, godly couples find great satisfaction in raising children for the Lord. The joys and blessings of parenting outweigh the sacrifices.

Childless couples, like Hannah, find their peace by committing their situation to the Lord and looking for whatever He has in mind for them. When God closes one door, He opens another.

5. Faithful parents dedicate their children to the Lord's service (1 Samuel 1:11). This dedication does not need to be a formal declaration setting a child apart for particular work. Nevertheless, each child should know that he has been dedicated to God for whatever God has in mind for him. This, after all, is only a "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

6. Parents reproduce the faith by cultivating meekness and humility (1:15, 16). Hannah responded to Eli's accusation in a respectful way and won his blessing. The meek shall inherit the earth, and in many ways, they already do. For one thing, they inherit godly children like Samuel.

7. Godly parents exercise a faith that brings rest (1:18). Hannah prayed in faith; then she rested in faith. Although faith may lead us to agonize in prayer, faith also leads us through that struggle to resignation, contentment, rest, and even joy. Those who lean hardest on the Lord are happiest.

Unreserved in Commitment

8. God-fearing parents build respect for authority (1 Samuel 1:26; 2:11). Admittedly, God's representatives may be far from perfect. But we respect them, partly because we "honour all men" (1 Peter 2:17), but even more because "they ... must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). Theirs is no small responsibility.

9. The godly receive children as gifts from the Lord to be prepared for His service (1 Samuel 1:27-28). Our children have been created by God, not us. He owns them. He lends them to us for a brief period of time. We not only give them back to the Lord but also train them for His service. We may need to consciously commit them to the Lord again and again as they move into new fields of service.

10. Faithful parents keep their vows (1 Samuel 1:28). Baptismal vows, marriage vows—these are tests of character. They are worth reviewing sometimes to see how well we are keeping them. We should make very

few if any vows other than these and should break none of them unless we have vowed to do something against God's will.

Our lesser obligations also deserve to be honored. Children sense when their parents keep their commitments. This lays a firm foundation under their feet and prepares them to be solid saints.

11. Parents who reproduce the faith show a continuing interest in their children (1 Samuel 2:19). Although they leave their children more and more to the direction of other people and let their children take on more responsibilities, good parents stay in touch. They never say, "He's reached his mid-teens, so there's not much I can say anymore." They take an interest in their children's reports from Bible school, in their service activities, in their new jobs, in their courtship, and in their growing convictions.

Important Teachings

1. Godly parents make worship a priority (1 Samuel 1:3).
2. The godly continue doing right despite evil surroundings (1 Samuel 1:3).
3. The righteous take their burdens to the Lord in prayer (1 Samuel 1:10).
4. God-fearing couples desire children (1 Samuel 1:11).
5. Faithful parents dedicate their children to the Lord's service (1 Samuel 1:11).
6. Parents reproduce the faith by cultivating meekness and humility (1 Samuel 1:15-16).
7. Godly parents exercise a faith that brings rest (1 Samuel 1:18).
8. God-fearing parents build respect for authority (1 Samuel 1:26; 2:11).
9. The godly receive children as gifts from the Lord to be prepared for His service (1 Samuel 1:27-28).
10. Faithful parents keep their vows (1 Samuel 1:28).
11. Parents who reproduce the faith show a continuing interest in their children (1 Samuel 2:19).

Answers to Questions

1. How were the circumstances of Elkanah and Hannah's worship different from ours? How were they similar?

They had slower travel and fewer opportunities to worship collectively than we do. They operated under the Old Testament system of worship.

They had the same God we have today, who expects and accepts sincere

worship. They were beset by hindrances and distractions that needed to be overcome.

2. What do we find to admire in Elkanah and Hannah's worship?

They worshiped regularly. They worshiped in spite of serious flaws in their leaders.

3. What personal and family practices today give evidence that we are placing priority on worship?

Striving to keep regular worship habits in spite of time pressures, preparing for church worship (arriving punctually, studying one's Sunday school lesson, and so forth), and worshiping spontaneously in song and in prayers from the heart all indicate proper priorities.

4. Did Hannah's prayer go beyond bargaining with God? Explain.

Yes. Her prayer was an all-out effort to reach God Himself, not merely to get His gifts.

5. What do you think Hannah's God would most like to teach us about our own prayer habits?

Among other things, He would like to teach us not to wait for major emergencies to drive us to our knees. The ringing telephone, the misplaced paper, the children's argument, the bright sunrise, and countless other things can prompt us to lift our hearts in supplication, intercession, and praise.

6. How will praying for and with our children affect our attitudes toward them?

We will see them as God's children and ourselves as accountable to Him for their well-being.

7. What did Hannah's commitment and faithful fulfillment of it do for Samuel?

It taught him that God held him responsible to keep his commitments both to God and to man. It made him a solid, dependable leader.

8. How does Hannah's attitude toward Eli challenge us?

Her respect for an imperfect leader reminds us that even leaders with serious flaws should receive our respect, not only because it is good for them but also because it is good for us.

9. How do our responsibilities toward our children change as they grow?

We have less and less direct control, but if we have established a godly relationship with them over the years, our influence will affect their judgment, and our advice will still be important to them.

Summarizing the Lesson

As the year wanes and the nights grow longer and darker, we appreciate even more the warmth and brightness of our homes. Just so, as the gloom of evil descends ever more heavily across the land, God looks for the cheerful light of homes like Elkanah and Hannah's. Here parents teach their children how to worship God, how to respect others, how to keep their commitments, and how to make the Gospel way of life attractive.

Research Guide

You may wish to study the law of the Nazarite in Numbers 6 to get an idea of the lifelong commitment Hannah was making in 1 Samuel 1:11.