



STUDY AND DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Based on the story of Hannah and young Samuel.

Ideal for sermons and small groups; adaptable for work with children and young people.



Desperate prayer (I Sam 1:9-11)

The story begins in the midst of prolonged sadness, rivalry between two wives and a woman whose tears never ceased to flow. Elkanah had two wives; Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none and faced the constant ridicule from Peninnah, and no doubt other women, for her barren state.

Hannah turns to prayer weeping and wailing. How many situations do we find ourselves in that seem to have been unresolved for a long time? Should we not get on our knees and let our tears flow before God? *Present or make a list on a flip chart of the negative, hurtful words we hear others say to us when we are in desperate situations. Then think of all the words God wants us to hear about how much he loves and how precious we are in his eyes.*

Remember we cannot bargain with God by making vows in exchange for God answering our prayers but we can make commitments of sacrifice to celebrate how we will respond in faith. **What will you do for Jesus?**

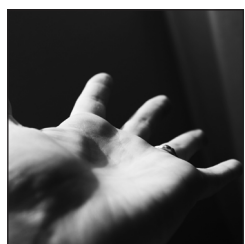


Dedication and devotion (I Sam 1:26b-28)

Eli, the priest, was present as Hannah poured out her heart to God. She is told to go in peace and Eli implores God to answer her prayers. Two to three years later Hannah returns with the young Samuel. It was one thing for Hannah to make a promise to God but now she is obedient to her vow, handing over her precious gift of a son to serve in the Temple full-time. Her prospect is to see Samuel just once a year. Some dedication, some devotion. What a sacrifice!

What commitment are you prepared to make to follow Christ? If we plead through tears for the lives of children to be transformed for the better in our cities, what are we ready to give up, set aside and give over to the Lord. God gave up his only Son out of Heaven for our salvation. Jesus told us to carry our cross (Lk 14:27).

Discuss or present examples of those around you who have given up much to further God's work to the glory of his name.



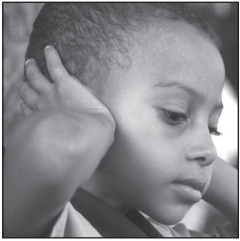
Developing grace (I Sam 2:17-21)

The development and maturing of Samuel in the house of the Lord contrasts markedly with the two sons of Eli (men not children) who were abusing their position of administering sacrifices. Surely, God hates sin and even more so when it desecrates places of worship which must be holy: such corruption discolours the praise of His children.

How thrilled Hannah would have been as she visited her son each year, bringing a new robe and observing the outpouring of God's grace on her firstborn as he grew in faith and wisdom in the Lord. Note that God blesses Hannah with five more children!

All have sinned, so those ministering in our churches are not without fault. However, **in what ways can we fill our places of worship with more of the Holy Spirit by releasing children more extensively into service?**

List and discuss (or present) all the ways we might see God's grace in action through the children and young people in our midst.



Deafness to the Lord (1 Sam 3:1-9)

We are told that the word of the Lord was rare at the time of the Hannah-Samuel story. Was this because God was not speaking or that the people were not listening? Certainly if you don't listen you won't hear! Ask parents about speaking to their children! What do you think?

Even when we hear, there is the question of recognising God's voice. The famous story of Samuel describes how the young boy (tradition suggests he was 12 years old) was woken from his sleep by a voice calling that he thinks is the priest, Eli. Eli informs Samuel three times that he was not crying out and on the third occasion, realising it must be God speaking, he sends him back prepared, with

instructions of how to respond.

What lessons can we learn from this story about hearing from God? *Here are some suggestions, but how many more can you think of?* It was night time; it was quiet; sleep was interrupted; God calls our name; God waits until we are ready to listen; age is no barrier to hearing; the Lord speaks personally; God will confirm his revelation (see 1 Sam 1:27-36).



Divine revelation (1 Sam 3:10-16)

With Eli's instruction freshly received, Samuel returns to his room and his bed to lie down and await God speaking again. This time the young boy responds with words we may well copy, "Speak, for your servant is listening." The judgement against Eli and his wayward and uncorrected sons is revealed to Samuel.

What did Samuel make of this; how do you think he felt? *List his sentiments: fear; awe; anxiety; peace; etc.*

To help more children and young people out of misery, abandonment, lovelessness and hardship across our cities, what does this Bible story teach us about receiving God's guidance as to what we should do?

In summary, we should:

- be desperate in prayer
- be dedicated and devoted to Christ
- note that children can bring developments in grace
- reverse our deafness to God
- teach children to recognise God speaking, so that we might receive the divine revelation that the LORD wishes to impart to us.

You may wish to finish with this prayer:

Lord Jesus,

Help each of us to educate, equip, empower children about talking and listening to you in prayer.

Give us opportunities to reveal something of your love and power to the children in our midst.

And may vulnerable children with tough lives draw close to you in prayer and reveal you to others around them.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Amen

The World Weekend of Prayer is held over the first weekend of June every year, uniting hundreds of thousands of adults and children globally. It is powered by Viva, an international Christian charity that inspires lasting change in children's lives through the power of collective action in 37 community networks worldwide.