



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1 Samuel

### Lesson 2: 1 Samuel 1

The first few chapters of 1 Samuel are cherished by countless women because they contain the story of Samuel's birth to the once barren Hannah. Many women can understand Hannah's yearning for a child, as well as her elation when God gave her a son. However, I am guessing that few women would be willing to show their gratitude in the manner that Hannah did. As you read about Hannah, consider how you would have felt and acted if you were in her position. Let's begin!

**Character Study:** As you go through each lesson, write down anything you learn about Samuel, David, or Saul. Consider making a table. Put Samuel's name in the first column, Saul's in the second etc. Then, make rows for categories like family background, place of residence, influential acquaintances, personality traits, spiritual traits etc. Make sure to include the book, chapter, and verse where each piece of information can be found. This lesson will focus entirely on Samuel and his family background.

#### Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2

These verses contain many vital details about Samuel and his family.

**Read: 1 Chronicles 6:22-28, Numbers 3:30-31, Joshua 21:1-5.**

**What do these verses reveal about the ancestry of Elkanah and the duties given to his family?**

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**The Kohathites that were not descended from Aaron resided in the lands of what three tribes?**

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Samuel's lineage can be somewhat confusing. Elkanah, Samuel's father, was descended from the priestly Kohathite clan, a sub-group of the Tribe of Levi. God tasked this family with the care and protection of the holy objects used in the tabernacle. As a Kohathite descendent, Samuel was permitted to serve in the tabernacle.

If Elkanah was a Levite, why does 1 Samuel 1:1 say that he was an Ephraimite? The sons of Kohath were given towns by Joshua, at the command of God, in the lands that belonged to Dan, Manasseh and Ephraim. Elkanah came from the line of Levitical Priests that had settled in Ramathaim of the Zuphites, a town in the land of Ephraim. That is why he is called an Ephraimite while, in actuality, he was a Levite.

#### Read 1 Samuel 3-8

These verses paint a detailed picture of the spiritual and emotional state of Elkanah's family.

**Read Joshua 18:1. What important structure was in Shiloh?**

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**Read Deuteronomy 16:16-17. How often were the Israelites supposed to visit the tabernacle and what were they to do there?**

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At a time when, according to Judges 21:25, “everyone did what was right in their own eyes,” Elkanah continued to faithfully observe God’s laws. He made his yearly sacrifices at the tabernacle in Shiloh in accordance with God’s command. Shiloh literally means “tranquil” or “secure” (Brand). However, there is no tranquility in Elkanah’s family when he visits Shiloh. Elkanah had decided to marry two women, a decision that caused significant problems for his family. While having multiple wives was not uncommon in Israelite culture, this practice was not promoted by God. There are several examples in the Bible of polygamy creating strife for the families that practiced it.

**Read Genesis 16:1-6 and Genesis 29:31-30:24. How do the family dynamics described in these passages mirror those of Elkanah’s family?**

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Just like Abraham and Jacob, Elkanah had no peace within his family. Elkanah had children by Peninnah, but he loved the barren Hannah more. Hannah, whose name means “favored,” received a double portion at the feast because of Elkanah’s preference and concern for her. As Elkanah showed more affection to Hannah, Peninnah grew jealous and began to attack Hannah and her barren condition. No one was content in this arrangement!

**Read Genesis 30:22-23 and Luke 1:24-25. What word(s) is/are used to describe barrenness?**

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Infertility was a difficult condition for an Israelite woman to tolerate. God had promised that if the Israelites stayed faithful to God, he would bless them by not allowing any of them to be barren (Deuteronomy 7:14). As a result, Israelites viewed barrenness as a sign of unfaithfulness to God (Walvoord and Zuck 433). Being harassed for not having any children would have been hard enough, but Penninah’s taunts may have also questioned Hannah’s reputation as a faithful Israelite woman.

If this was the case, can you imagine how Hannah must have felt? Not only did she not have a child, she was also being accused of ungodly behavior because of it. I can imagine her worrying about her past sins, going over and over them again, wondering if any of them had prevented her from receiving this blessing from God.

**What are some signs of Hannah’s distress (see v. 7)?**

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**Read 1 Samuel 1:9-11**

**What vow does Hannah make to God?**

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**How does Hannah refer to herself in this passage?**

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Hannah does what we all should do when our hearts are burdened; she prays to God. She humbly pleads with Him to have her affliction taken away. She does not demand a child as if she deserves one, but puts herself at God’s mercy, calling herself His “maidservant.” Hannah also pairs her request with a vow.

**Read Numbers 30:1-2. Describe God’s law concerning vows.**

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Hannah did not make an empty promise; she made her sacrificial vow with the understanding that God expected her to keep it. Remember how Elkanah was from the tribe of Levi? Hannah’s vow committed her son to a life of service as a Levitical priest. In doing so, she forfeited the privilege of raising her son and watching him grow and mature. Hannah made the vow more restricting by promising to not allow her son’s head to be shaved. This condition meant that her son would follow the tenets of the Nazarite vow.

**Read Numbers 6:1-21. What were the restrictions of the Nazarite vow?**

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Hannah promises that her son would be set apart by the constraints of the vow for his whole life. His uncut hair would be a visual sign of his dedication to the Lord. Her vow exhibits both

respect for God and loving care for her unborn son. Devoting her son’s life to service was the most valuable gift she could give to God, and the best life she could give to her son.

**What are some ways that we can show our children the value of serving God?**

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**What can we offer to God in response to the grace He offers us through Jesus’s sacrifice? (Romans 12:1-2)**

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**Read 1 Samuel 1:12-18**

Eli makes his first appearance in the story. We know from verse 3 that Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phineas, served as priests in the tabernacle. After Hannah explained her situation and the agony that it caused her, Eli blesses her. Since Eli was the High Priest, Hannah accepted his blessing as assurance that the Lord had accepted her petition. She dried her tears and was finally able to partake of the feast.

**Read 1 John 5:13-15. How can we be confident that God will answer our prayers?**

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**Read 1 Samuel 1:19-23**

Hannah’s request was granted. She named the boy Samuel, which is Hebrew for “name of God” but also sounds similar to the Hebrew for “heard by



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God” (Tsumara 127). She tells Elkanah that she will not go to sacrifice again until the boy is weaned. In ancient times, children were often not weaned until they were three or older. By four or five, Samuel could talk and walk, and would not have to rely on a mother to tend to him.

**Read 1 Samuel 1:24-28**

**Read Numbers 15:8-10**

**What were the Israelites to offer when they fulfilled a vow?**

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**What did Hannah offer?**

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Depending on your translation, your Bible may say that Hannah offered a three-year-old bull or three bulls. Either way, Hannah brought more than what was required of her in terms of flour and wine. This generous offering reflected the depth of Hannah’s thankfulness for God’s provision. Not only did she bring an abundance of the expected items, she also brought her only son as a living sacrifice to God.

**Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11**

Hannah’s prayer is a beautiful poetic passage that expresses her abundant gratitude for God’s provision. Much like Mary would do almost a thousand years later in Luke 1:46-55, Hannah expresses her awe at God’s authority, as well as her reverence for His sovereign power and choice.

**List the main idea of each section of the prayer**

• **Vs. 1:**

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• **Vs. 2-3:**

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• **Vs. 4-8:**

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• **Vs. 9-10:**

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While the prayer offers praise, it also contains prophecy. Using an animal horn as metaphor for strength and pride, Hannah thanks God for strengthening her position in verse 1, and praises God for the exaltation of His anointed one in verse 10 (Tsumura 141). “The Lord’s anointed” is a phrase that refers to God’s chosen king who would be ceremonially anointed with oil (see 1 Samuel 10:1 and 1 Samuel 16:13). Samuel would be the one to anoint the first two kings of Israel. Verse 10 points to the coming appointment of a king, something that only happens because of God’s decision to bless Hannah with Samuel.

Verse 10 may also look forward to the greatest king. You may already know the Hebrew word for “anointed one.” It is “Messiah.”



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**Who is often called “the Messiah?”**

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Her prayer is prophetic in another way. It presents the idea of God elevating the weak and humbling the strong (v. 4-8). We will see throughout 1 Samuel that the mighty and proud (Peninnah, King Saul, the Philistines) fall while the weak and humble (Hannah, David, Israel) rise to the highest heights.

**As you read through the rest of 1 Samuel, keep a list of who God exalts and who he brings low. You will find that some people may appear on both lists.**

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After Hannah fulfills her vow and praises God, she and her family return to Ramah, while Samuel stays to serve the High Priest Eli at Shiloh. Unfortunately, Samuel’s new caregivers do not share Hannah’s obedient heart.

**Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17**

**Read Leviticus 7:28-34. What were the sons of Levi, or the priests, to receive as their portion of the peace offering. What did Hophni and Phineas do in comparison?**

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In contrast to Hannah’s faith and humility, the writer describes the sin and arrogance of Hophni and Phineas, the two sons of the High Priest Eli. Eli’s family was born with the privilege of being

allowed to offer sacrifices for the nation of Israel. In exchange for their service in the tabernacle, God allocated a portion of the sacrifices to the priests for their own sustenance.

Hophni and Phineas did not think that God’s provision was enough. They wanted roasted meat instead of boiled and desired the flavor of the fat that the Lord had commanded to be burned. They were not thankful for the blessings that God had given them and used their position as priests to take more than they were allowed. In doing so, they profaned the sacrifices of their countrymen as they did not offer them in the manner that God had ordained. The brothers offered sacrifices not to honor God, but to satisfy their own desires.

**Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21**

**Compare Hophni and Phineas’s motivation for their service in the tabernacle to Hannah’s motivation for her sacrifices. How did God reward Hannah’s attitude?**

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In contrast to the self-serving sacrifices of the priests, Hannah offered a substantial sacrifice out of pure gratitude for God’s provision. She gave more than the law required of her. Her prayer in 2:1-10 praised God for His strength and humbly thanked Him for providing for the weak. Because of her grateful attitude, God blesses her with a brood of five children, even though she had only asked for a single son.



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**What are some ways that we treat God’s provision like Hophni and Phineas treated it?**

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**What are some “Hannah-like” actions you can take in response to God’s blessings?**

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How merciful is our God? On top of providing for earthly needs like food, shelter, and community, God provides us with the opportunity of salvation. Just as He removed Hannah’s reproach by giving her a son, God took away our guilt by offering His own son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). What an amazing gift that God has given us! We must respond to this provision with the humility, respect, and thanksgiving that it demands.

As we close this lesson, I want you to consider the influence that Hannah might have had on Samuel.

**What verses might reveal that Hannah positively influenced her son’s spiritual growth?**

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**What are some specific ways that we can help our children’s spiritual lives to blossom?**

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Brand, Chad, et al. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Holman Reference, 2015.

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