

Here are questions linked to the upcoming 4 part sermon series based on the Prayer of Hannah (1 Samuel 1 – 3), starting 27 Jan for 8 & 10am services. We encourage you to use these in your small group as well as in personal devotions. We suggest small groups reflect on the questions prior to meeting and that your group reads the passage a couple of times, ideally from two different versions including The Message. You may opt to rather focus on 1 or 2 of the Our Story questions.

Week One – The Prayer of Hannah – Passionate Intensity – 1 Sam 1:1-20

Open

Do you like your name? Do you know what your name means or why your name was chosen for you?

Dig Deeper

1. Spend time discussing:
 - The relationship between Hannah and Peninnah. Describe in your own words the anguish of each of these women
 - Elkanah's response to his wife's needs. How could he have responded with greater sensitivity?
2. We read in vs 10 *'in bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord'* – imagine and describe what may have been some of the characteristics of her bold and fervent prayer.
3. Why do you think Hannah's face was no longer downcast as she went home? In what way did Hannah experience the touch of God on her life even though her outward circumstances had not changed?

Our Story

1. Hannah was a lowly woman who was to make a significant contribution to God's bigger picture. Do you find it hard to believe that your little life is also part of God's bigger picture? Can you believe that the God of Moses, Abraham and Hannah is also your God and as intimately involved in your life as He was in theirs?
2. How does your perspective on the above question influence how you pray to God?
3. Read the following passages: Jeremiah 29:11-13; Psalm 119:10,20; Isaiah 26:9. Can you describe a time when pouring out your heart to God has made all the difference (even if your outward circumstances did not change)? How do the Psalms model honesty without a 'gimme gimme gimme' approach?
4. Does gathering at church to pray with others sound like another thing in a busy diary or worth the effort, why?
5. Read Acts 4:23-31. There are instances in the Bible when God prompts his people to fervent and sustained intercession in preparation for spiritual breakthrough. Do we hear God calling CCK to such prayer? What breakthroughs may we be seeking?

Week Two – The Prayer of Hannah – Unreserved Dedication (1 Sam 1:21-28)

Open

Were you baptised or dedicated as a baby, or neither?

Dig Deeper

1. With some research, can you describe the annual vow that Elkanah was making (vs 21)
2. Woman played a significant role in Israel's religion. How was this demonstrated in the way Elkanah respected Hannah's vow?
3. What reflections do you have on Elkanah and Hannah's marriage and their willingness to basically 'give up' their son to God?
4. Read 2 Samuel 24:24, how do David and Hannah demonstrate sacrificial trust? How do we see this same trust as Jesus prays in Gethsemane, Luke 22: 39-45?

Our Story

1. Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. How flippant are we with our words in our prayers, worship songs?
2. Committing ourselves to God has implications for our everyday life and behaviour. When you became a Christian describe one such implication of your spiritual vow that affected your life and behaviour?
3. CCK's vision is that every member be helped to bring their practical and spiritual gifts to the community and beyond. As part of this church community, do you feel excited, challenged or threatened by this vision? Do you imagine that others are more important or responsible for living out this vision?
4. How does the prayer *Lord help me to do well the few things you have called me to do*, bring reassurance?
5. Is there is contribution you can make in terms of your spiritual gifts this year? Is there an element of offering, surrender or costly sacrifice in this contribution?
6. What reassurance or promise does Jesus offer you as you offer yourself to him? Can you reflect on some Scripture verses that point to these promises?

Week Three – The Prayer of Hannah – Gratitude and Joy (1 Sam 2:1-10)

Open

What is one specific thing you are grateful for today?

Dig Deeper

1. It's likely Hannah would have carefully prepared her song of thanksgiving and praise in advance, drawing on poems of early Israel. Together imagine the scene of worship as she brings this Psalm to the Lord and those around her.
2. Read Hannah's Psalm and make a list of all the reasons Hannah has reason to sing, dividing your list into two categories: 1) What she learns about God's character, and 2) Why those who trust him have no need for anxiety.
3. What does this Psalm say about those that seek after 'power, prestige and possessions'?
4. Read Luke 1:46-55 – Mary would draw on this Psalm a thousand years later. Compare Mary's Psalm to Hannah's. In what ways do we see glimpses of Jesus in these two songs?

Our Story

1. Ignatian Spirituality emphasizes the following:
 - i) To take the Love of God seriously
 - ii) To find God in all things (consolation and desolation)
 - iii) Make your own contribution ('Do your little bits of good')

How do you see these three aspects in Hannah's Psalm? What aspect comes easily for you, what aspect less so?

2. Spend some time talking about ways to cultivate a posture of gratitude and joy. Discuss the following suggested by author Ed Stetzer:
 - i) Slow down
 - ii) Stop the comparisons
 - iii) Practice gratitude

What would you like to try this week? What are ways you can bring gratitude into your prayers or with those around you?

3. Are there aspects of your life where power, prestige and possessions are drawing you away from God?

Week Four – The Prayer of Hannah – Samuel’s Prayer of Attentiveness (1 Sam 3:1-11)

Open

At a dinner party do you prefer to sit back and listen or to actively engage in the conversation?

Dig Deeper

1. Vs 1 says that the Word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. What was the state of spiritual attentiveness that God had to call three times?
2. Samuel was a remarkable man in Israel’s history. He was pivotal in restoring the moral and religious life of the nation and he oversaw the transition from theocracy to God’s direct rule in harmony with a faithful king. But in this account he is probably around 12 years old and learning to listen to the voice of God. What are some of the things he learns about God and himself in this encounter?
3. Read 1 Sam: 2:12-20 to understand the sins of Eli’s sons, who were priests serving alongside him. What do you make of Eli’s openness to God’s sovereign guidance and correction?

Our Story

1. How do you believe God speaks to us today?
2. Samuel replied to God’s call with the words *Speak, for your servant is listening*. What are the ways you have learned to listen to the voice of God?
3. The desert fathers held that we do more speaking than listening in prayer. They distinguished between the prayer of the mind and the prayer of the heart: *to pray is to descend with the mind into the heart*. What do you think they meant?
4. The desert fathers suggested that the prayer of the heart is nurtured by short, simple prayers – *When you pray do not try to express yourself in fancy words, for often it the simple, repetitious phrases of a little child that our Father in heaven finds most irresistible. One phrase on the lips of tax collector was enough to win Gods mercy; one humble request made with faith was enough to save the good thief*. How might this approach to prayer help us to have more of a listening and submissive posture?
5. What do you understand corporate prophetic discernment to mean?