

Bible Chat week starting 16 10 22

1 Samuel 1: 1 - 20.

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite[a] 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?'

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 favour 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 worshipped 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.'

1. Do you ever feel disappointed with life, with church or with God? Can you share some examples?
2. How should we approach someone who has been unable to have a child when they would have liked to have one. What mistakes might we make in this regard? How can we do better?
3. Reflect on Hannah's situation in the first eight verses. List the reasons for her pain and disappointment.

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4. Discuss the awkward relationship between Penninah and Hannah. Try to get a feel of their day-to-day life. Try to imagine how things went at the big festival times. Make connections with life today, if you can.
5. The sermon criticised Elkanah for not really listening to Hannah, the wife he said he loved, especially thinking of his words in verse 8. To what extent do you think this criticism is fair? What lessons do we learn for our own lives?
6. How would you describe Hannah's prayer? What lessons can we learn for our own prayers?
7. What might we learn from Eli's mis-steps in this story?
8. Trace the steps between Hannah's infertility and the birth of Jesus.
9. People often do face long periods of pain and disappointment. What value might come from such times, if any? How can we 'pray our pain'? What does this do to our hearts?