

The Story  
Chapter 10  
Study 10

*The story...*

We are introduced to Elkanah, Peninnah and Hannah – Peninnah had children, Hannah did not

Hannah promises the Lord that if He gives her a son, she will dedicate him to the Lord

Eli the priest observes Hannah praying silently and thinks she is drunk. When he finds out that she is praying, and what she is praying for, he blesses her

Samuel is born

Hannah takes him to the temple and dedicates him to the Lord

Hannah has three more sons

God speaks to Samuel – tells him that He is about to judge Eli's family

Samuel is recognised as a prophet of God

The Philistines defeat the Israelites in battle. The Israelites then bring the Ark of the Covenant into their camp. The Philistines hear about this and are afraid, but they defeat the Israelites again and capture the Ark

Hophni and Phineas, Eli the priest's sons, die in battle, and Eli, hearing news of the captured Ark, falls and dies

The Ark's presence is bad news for the Philistines so they put it on a ox cart and send it back, unmanned, to Israel

The Israelites want a king – highlighted by the failure of Samuel's sons to follow in their father's footsteps. The Lord sees this as a rejection of His Kingship

Samuel warns the Israelites of the possible abuses of a king yet they still want a king

Saul is privately anointed by Samuel as king, then at a later ceremony, he is once more anointed as king

After an amazing victory over the Amalekites, Saul is acknowledged as king by all Israel

Another battle is in the offing. The Israelites are intimidated and start to desert. Saul is waiting for Samuel to perform the sacrifices prior to the battle. When Samuel delays, Saul takes it upon himself to perform the priestly function of sacrificing. God judges Saul for the disobedience

Saul leads the Israelites to battle against the Amalekites. He is to destroy all their possession but retains livestock. This disobedience confirms God's judgement against him, and his dynasty would end with him.

*1. What do you learn about prayer from Hannah?*

The Hebrew people had a simple theology – everything, good and bad, came from the hand of God. Therefore, if Hannah was unable to have children it was because "the Lord had closed her womb." While this raises all sorts of philosophical problems, it does have a great benefit: if the Lord closed it, he can open it! And Hannah believed. And she prayed and asked the Lord to open it.

We might understand things differently from Hannah and the early Hebrew people – that isn't what we are discussing here – yet we can still learn from Hannah. When we face a challenge, because we believe in a sovereign God, we too can pray

earnestly as Hannah did, because regardless of who we understand to be the cause of our plight, our sovereign God is bigger than our plight and can change it.

What we SHOULD NOT LEARN from Hannah is to try and bargain with God. In the time of the Judges a man bargained with God – he would sacrifice to the Lord the first thing he saw coming through his door (or something like that). Turns out it was his daughter! We do not bargain with God in the sense that IF God does this, THEN we in turn will do that. We CAN bargain/negotiate with God like Abraham did over Sodom and Gomorrah in the sense that we present our case to God, giving reasons why it would be a good idea if God did answer our prayers. Prayer is a discussion with God, not a presentation of a shopping list. Prayer is dynamic.

But that is more than we learn from Hannah's prayer!

### *2. How did Samuel show his faith in God?*

There are several instances in our passage:

- When God had spoken to Samuel, telling him what he – God – was going to do to Eli's family, Samuel did not want to tell Eli. He was still a lad. Yet, as a fledgling prophet he showed faith in God by being willing none the less to tell Eli what the Lord had said.
- Samuel stood up against the current – when the Israelites were worshipping foreign gods, Samuel was willing to insist that they return to the one true God. That is always difficult to do, it requires faith in God to stand against the current.
- It is impressive the way Samuel and the Lord communicated. Samuel is unhappy about the people's desire for a king, he talks to the Lord about it. The Lord is able to communicate what is on His heart to Samuel. Samuel goes ahead with anointing Saul king even though he was unhappy about it. It could be that that is all an indication of Samuel's faith in God – it translated into relationship.

### *3. Why was it wrong for the Israelites to ask for a king?*

God was their king. God would have wanted the Israelites to trust Him, and obey Him. The prophet Samuel was to have been God's mouth piece. The Israelites were not happy with this. They looked around and saw the other nations had a "king" they could "see" and they wanted to be like the other nations.

The people blamed the failure of Samuel's sons for their reason for wanting a king. God saw through what they were saying so he says to Samuel: "it is not you they have rejected, but me they have rejected as king". But the bigger issue was actually that they had never been willing to submit to God's kingship – right from the first time they sinned after God brought them out of Egypt. It would have been easier to serve other gods – to sin – if God wasn't their king. So God relented and gave them what they wanted, even though it would be to their disadvantage ultimately.

### *4. What factors lead to King Saul's demise?*

Saul had everything going for him – he was physically impressive, he was a good battle commander, he was decisive. But he was disobedient to the Lord. And I think that his disobedience Gilgal stemmed from an over estimation of himself, and a lack of faith in God. He saw the men deserting while waiting for Samuel to arrive and do the offering – a priestly function. So Saul took it on himself to do the offering – doing what was not proper for a king to do, maybe inspired by a lack of faith – the battle was actually the Lord's, not his.

Then, against the Amalekites, when God was using Saul as his instrument of judgement against them for what they had done to Moses, Saul disobeyed again. God had commanded Saul to destroy everything. Saul spared the king and the aft calves and lambs. He kept those “for sacrifice.” But, as God says in another place, *“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams - 1Sam. 15:22*

Disobedience, regardless of our rationalisation, does not sit well with God. Saul lost his kingship because of it.

*5. How did Saul respond when confronted with his sin? How do you respond when confronted with your own shortcoming?*

Saul followed the age old response: make an excuse, try and justify it, blame someone else:

We read (page 143) that Saul, when confronted by Samuel, responded: *When I saw the men scattering and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling ... I thought “Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal and I have not sought the Lord’s favour” So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offerings.*

He made an excuse, he tried to justify it, even made it sound like the “religious” thing to do, all leading him to feel “compelled” to do what he did. God saw it differently – disobedience.

In the second instance, Saul justified his actions from a religious point of view – he wanted to offer them to the Lord. But, the Lord wanted obedience not sacrifice.

*When was the first time in the bible we heard the excuses? – Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent.*

*6. What instances of God’s grace do we see in this chapter?*

Hannah had Samuel

When God was rejected as king, he did not destroy Israel. He gave them a king.

At Saul’s anointing, when he was hiding among the supplies, did you notice it was the Lord who pointed out where Saul was?

God gave them victory over Nahash the Ammonite

God promised that even though they had rejected Him as King, yet he promised the bless them if they obeyed Him – God’s blessing continued even though they had a king