

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Proper 28
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:4-20

Background

There are times in life when we want something with all of our heart but there doesn't seem to be anything we can do to get it. Looking around and seeing our friends and neighbors with the blessings we desire can make us feel jealous and sad. The challenge in these times is to keep focused on the good we have in our lives and to keep our hearts and minds open to the blessings God has provided. Our scriptures tell us to “pray without ceasing” but what can we do when it feels like our prayers are going unanswered?

A Notation for This Week's Scripture Passage

Hannah is a lucky woman. She is beautiful and her husband Elkanah loves her more than anything. But Hannah desperately wants to have a baby. She has prayed feverishly, night and day, to the point that she seems to be losing her sanity. Through it all Elkanah steadfastly proclaims his love and stands beside her. But Hannah's mind is made up and she does not care how it looks to others on the outside, she knows the deepest desire of her heart and pleads with God asking for God to send her wholeness. While this verse can be challenging because it seems to suggest that God's answer will always be “yes” to those who pray hard enough; it is also vital to our understanding of healing in the modern form. What if Hannah's healing was not that she bore a child, but that she got up the morning after her tear-filled prayer at the temple and worshipped God despite her sadness?

Theme: Oh Lord Hear My Prayer

Before Class: A copy of the script for each child. For the activity you will need to decide whether to burn prayer papers or buy water dissolving paper and using the font (or other water source) to dissolve the prayers. Depending on that choice you will need: 1 sheet of chosen paper for each student, pencils for each student, and set up the area to send the prayers (either water or fire.)

Beginning: Invite the children to join you in the circle. Ask them to tell you about a time when they really, really wanted something but it seemed like they would never get it.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for listening to our prayers. Amen.

The Story: 1 Samuel 1:4-20

Ask the children for 4 volunteers. These children will read the story in parts. You will need a narrator, Elkanah, Hannah, and Eli. Give each of the children a copy of the reading in parts (found at the end of the lesson) and invite them to read the story aloud.

Reflection Questions:

- Who are the people in this story?
- What does Hannah want?
- I wonder how Elkanah feels.
- I wonder how Hannah feels.
- I wonder why Hannah goes to the temple.
- I wonder what Eli thought when he saw Hannah crying and praying.
- I wonder how Hannah felt at the end of the lesson.

Activity: Sending our Prayers Up to God: For the activity today the children will have an opportunity to write a prayer that is for their eyes only and then sending their prayers to God using fire or water. (If you want to use water - tie ins to baptism – you can purchase water soluble paper online. For fire - tie into light of Christ and the Holy Spirit - you can use plain paper but will need a safe place to burn.)

Invite the children to search deep inside of themselves and find the prayer that is most important for them. Give them time to write or draw the prayer on a piece of paper. Make sure to tell the children that no one will see their prayers, unless they invite someone to look at it. When everyone has had time to write their prayers ask them how they felt writing down their prayers. Do they feel like God is listening? After you finish talking about the prayers, bring the papers to the location where you plan to send them to God. If using water, the baptismal font would offer great symbolism for this. Though, a plain bowl would work just fine! For fire a fire place or safe spot outside will work.

Getting Closure: After the prayers have been “sent,” hold hands standing in a circle around the font or fire pit. Invite the kids to share one word that describes how they feel about this activity or prayer.

If you have extra time, you could then invite the children to create a prayer of thanksgiving to God on a large sheet of paper.

After each of the kids have shared, close with the prayer below.

Closing Prayer: God of all power, thank you for the ways that you bless us. We pray that you would answer the prayers we sent up to you in the best way for us. Amen.

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1 Samuel 1:4-20

Narrator: On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her,

Elkanah: "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

Narrator: After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. She made this vow:

Hannah: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

Narrator: As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her,

Eli: "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine."

Hannah: "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time."

Eli: "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him."

Hannah: "Let your servant find favor in your sight."

Narrator: Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said,

Hannah: "I have asked him of the LORD."