

Unlikely
An Unlikely Response to Disappointment- Session #1
Small Group Notes

Introduction:

Let's take a moment and understand the context of 1 Samuel. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are a continuation from the end of the book of Judges. Judges described how the people were living in the land. The cycle that you see in the book of Judges is that there would be a time of disobedience by the Israelites; the people would either experience a trial or tribulation because of their disobedience; God would send a judge to help teach the people how to follow the Lord; and then the people would be restored back to their fellowship with God. However, we see the hearts of the people at the end of Judges that continues into 1 Samuel as it says in Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

Therefore, we are going to see the story of three main characters: Samuel, who is the last judge; Saul, who is the first king of the children of Israel; and David, the shepherd boy that would become the king and establish the royal line that would lead to Christ.

In this session, we are going to see what happens when we wrestle with disappointment in the birth of Samuel. In the place of her desperation, we learn how she saw prayer as the way to navigate her disappointment.

Finish the following sentence, "The hardest that I have ever prayed for something was..."

What is your gut reaction when your prayer goes unanswered?

If you could ask God any question about prayer, what would it be?

Discuss: An Unlikely Response to Disappointment

1. Hannah responds with grace versus reacting in anger

- Read 1 Samuel 1:1-8

Explain: Hannah found herself in a desperate situation: she was childless (1:2). In those days, a woman's primary role in life was bearing children for her husband. Infertility equaled failure in other people's eyes. As if infertility weren't bad enough, Hannah was also taunted by her husband's other wife Peninnah (vv. 4-7). (It's important to note that polygamy was never God's plan for marriage but had become culturally acceptable in Old Testament times.)

Ask:

How have you experienced the kind of hopelessness and rejection Hannah faced?

When you get to that place of hopelessness, what is your response? To which “savior” do you turn?

How do you tend to respond to God when He seems to say no to your prayers?

2. Hannah continued to worship even in a dysfunctional system!

- Read 1 Samuel 1:9-11
- Don't let the weaknesses of man derail your devotion to God!

Explain: Eli served as the priest at this sanctuary and was assisted by his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Later we can see that Hophni and Phinehas abused their position as spiritual leaders to their own advantage. Yet even through their personal struggles along with Eli's, Hannah did not let that be something to dissuade her from worshiping God. Today, we hear of celebrity pastors that people focus on following and when a moral failure occurs, their faith is shaken. Yet here we have where Hannah's focus was directed to the right person, the Lord!

Ask:

What stands out to you about the details of Hannah's emotions during this time?

What do we learn about brokenness and desperation when we read about Hannah?

What can we learn about prayer by reading what she said in verse 11?

3. Hannah took her disappointment to the right place

- Read 1 Samuel 1:12-16
- We pour out our pain in the wrong places and pour in the wrong things.

Explain: Eli was confused by Hannah's anguish and scolded her for drunkenness in a holy place. Not only did Hannah have to clarify what was she was doing, she had to further reveal what was happening to her emotionally during this difficult moment. Yet Hannah remained steadfast to pray.

Ask:

Read Colossians 4:2, how does this verse relate to Hannah's story?

How do we see people try to deal with their disappointments outside of Christ?

4. Hannah believed her way to understanding

- Read 1 Samuel 1:17-18

Explain: As a result of Hannah's honest prayer (v. 11), the encouragement of Eli (v. 17), and her total surrender to God (v. 18), her sorrow and hopelessness became joy and contentment. She didn't have the guarantee that God would answer her prayer, but she hoped in Him anyway. Through our desperate situations, God is teaching us to be utterly dependent on Him, to have hope in the fulfillment of His promises, and to build testimonies of His mercy and love to encourage others who go through similar situations.

Ask:

Verse 18 says that her face was no longer downcast. We see that she experienced a transformation in her attitude before any answer came. What does that tell you about how we should approach God in prayer?

5. Hannah realized that the goal of disappointments aren't early exists but a chance for divine entrances.

- Read 1 Samuel 1:19-28
- A disappointment is not necessarily God's punishment but a part of His plan.
- God delivers through disappointments; not merely getting us out of it but by drawing us in.
- God will do his greatest work in the most "unlikely places."

Explain: Hannah specifically asked God for a son, and she even dedicated him to God before the prayer was answered. This displayed the confidence Hannah had in God's ability to work a miracle in her life, which is what gave her hope. But as Hannah shows us, confidence in God doesn't mean we're free from the emotions involved in struggle. It does mean, however, that we can live in hope and anticipation of how God will work in us. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him back to Eli the priest to fulfill her promise to God. He was probably around 3 years old at that time. Faithfulness and obedience to God meant Hannah had to give back to Him what she wanted most—her child.

Ask:

How did Hannah view the things God gave her? Is this the same view you have? Why or why not?

Why do you think so many of us "forget" about God once He answers our prayers? What does this tendency reveal about us?

What do you find most difficult about letting go and relying on God? How has this discussion helped you to understand how to navigate through disappointing circumstances?

Small Group Prayer Guide:

- Local
 - **Doors of Hope** Pray for the success of the new treatment center.

- **National**
 - **Rooted in Faith Deaf Church Connecticut** Pray for deaf people to understand the good news of Jesus Christ in their heart language (American Sign Language).
- **International**
 - **SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN PEOPLES.** Pray for teams in Sub-Saharan Africa, trying to meet an individual's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs.

Suggested Mission Activity:

For September, collect supplies for Doors of Hope. Also register at www.newvisionlife.com/events for Servant Saturday on September 24.