

# Praising God for Answered Prayer

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     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.
- So in the course of time, Hannah became pregnant and gave her to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, Because I asked the Lord for him. When her husband, Elkanah, went up with his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go.
- She said to her husband, After the boy is born, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will leave there always. Do what seems best to you, her husband, Elkanah, told her.
- Stay here until you have weaned him. Only may the Lord make good his word. So the woman stayed at home and nursed a son until she had weaned him. After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as it was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord, her child of the Lord.
- When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, Pardon me, my Lord. As surely as you leave, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord.
- [ 1 : 2 1 ]     I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I gave him to the Lord, for his whole life he shall be given over to the Lord, and he worshiped the Lord there.
- Thanks, Favre. And please do keep that open in front of you as we spend time in God's word together.
- So where I'm from originally is around about the town is a farming community, and so from time to time there would be a mart where cows and bulls and stuff are bought and sold.
- And so if you wanted to sell an animal, you had to put it into a trailer or a truck to bring it to the mart to sell it. And so what you would have to do is somehow get your animal onto the truck or the trailer, and as you led the animal onto the truck or the trailer, of course, it went nose first.
- Now, if you got its nose onto the trailer, in one sense you could say it was on the trailer. Look, there's its nose. There's its nose. It's on. But of course, in another sense, it wasn't really on at all, and there was a hope.
- [ 2 : 3 6 ]     It went onto the truck or the trailer before you could satisfactorily say that the job is done. Well, interestingly, in 1 Samuel, in verse 20, Hannah gives birth to a son by the name of Samuel.
- God has answered her prayer. Isn't it wonderful? Praise the Lord. The prayer is answered. Hannah's soul had been filled with grief. She poured that grief out to God. He filled her with her peace, and now he's answered her prayer.
- And you think, OK, the cow is on the trailer. But of course, what we see in this passage is the cow isn't on the trailer at all. The answer of the Lord to Hannah's prayer is just the beginning.

There's a whole lot more to come before the outworkings of this answer to prayer are fully seen. There's a whole lot more to come. And, you know, we can learn here from this passage because sometimes if we pray for something and God answers that prayer, we think that's it. Job done.

But of course, when God answers a prayer, usually or regularly, there's a whole lot more that has to happen or works itself out. We're invited, in a sense, into an adventure and a journey to see, OK, how is God going to continue to work through this answer to prayer?

[ 4 : 07 ] And that's what we're going to reflect on this morning. When God answers a prayer, what next? What next? Well, what we see in verse 19 is that in one sense, life seems to go on as normal.

In verse 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.

So in one sense, life goes on as normal. Elkanah, we're told earlier in the chapter, loved Hannah. Here he makes love to Hannah. And in verse 20, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son.

And you think, well, this is just kind of normal life, isn't it? But of course, if you were with us or if you're familiar with the earlier part of the chapter, you realize this wasn't normal for them.

This wasn't something that they could take for granted at all. Because there had been many years when they didn't have children, where they were trying to have children, but they remained childless.

[ 5 : 10 ] And so the amazing thing here is that what might be taken for granted was not life going on as normal. And of course, the Bible is clear about the biological reasons for this.

But what it wants to draw our attention to is that there is a higher reason, a primary reason. And that reason is that the Lord remembered Hannah.

In verse 19, the Lord remembered her. This is as a result of Hannah praying to God and God answering her prayer. The primary reason for this is because the Lord remembered her.

He worked through these secondary means, as God very often does. But the primary reason is that God answered this prayer. He remembered her. So we're kind of familiar with this idea in many areas of life where we have kind of primary reasons and secondary reasons.

So if I ask you, why are you here this morning? There may be any number of reasons that you can give me for why you're here. And of course, some of those reasons are more important than others.

[ 6 : 19 ] Or some of those reasons are more significant than others. What we see here is that the primary reason for Hannah and Elkanah having this boy is because God answered their prayer.

And Hannah realizes this in her response in verse 20. She named him Samuel, saying, Because I asked the Lord for him.

Now that doesn't seem like a big deal. But it is a world of difference between Hannah acknowledging that God has answered her prayer, recognizing that this is God at work, and praising him for it.

There's a world of difference between that and simply stopping at the biological level or the biological reason. Hannah sifts through the various reasons she could give.

For having this son, Samuel. And she picks out this little jewel, this little diamond, and says, The reason I have this boy is because the Lord has remembered me.

- [ 7 : 24 ] And this, for Hannah, is the most precious thing. Because the Lord is gracious. Because the Lord is generous. Because the Lord is good. Because the Lord has looked on me.
- He has not forgotten me. He has remembered me. And so you see Hannah here. As God has answered her prayer, she responds to the Lord with thanks and acknowledgement and praise for this.
- And she does that through the naming of her son Samuel, which echoes this phrase, Because I asked the Lord for him. And perhaps for you, you have seen answers to prayer in a very similar way.
- It's lovely to reflect on some of the names in our congregation. There's favor. There's gift. There's blessing. What beautiful names.
- Reflecting this desire to acknowledge before the Lord that children are a gift from him. There's Sean, which is more subtle. That's Irish for God's gift.
- [ 8 : 36 ] Or God is gracious. And so for Hannah, maybe for some of us, this is a way in which to acknowledge that God has answered a prayer. Whatever way you acknowledge it, though, isn't it so important to realize that when God answers a prayer, there is an opportunity for us to praise him, to thank him, to acknowledge it.
- So for Hannah, her answer to prayer here is descriptive. So it describes what happened in her life. It's not prescriptive. It's not saying this is exactly the way that God will always answer our prayers.
- But when he has answered a prayer in our life, it is an opportunity to thank him and to praise him. We think of Jesus when he heals those ten lepers and only one of them comes back to thank him.
- And he says, were there not ten who were healed? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider? When we give thanks to God for answered prayer, it doesn't untangle all the knots in other areas of our life.
- It doesn't mean that there aren't places where we continue to lament. But it does mean we want to glorify God and acknowledge his role, his primary role, in hearing and answering our prayer.
- [ 9 : 59 ] And so you realize now that God's answer to prayer is just the beginning of the journey, the beginning of the adventure. Hannah is invited into this praise and thanks of God, and so are we.
- And it's not only that, but there is more to come as this prayer works its way out in Hannah's life. So what next? Well, what next is to work out what next.
- So God has answered a prayer. This changes my life. So my life doesn't just continue now as it once did. And sometimes that's in a really big and significant way. Sometimes it's in a smaller way.
- It's interesting in verse 21, it seems that life just goes on as normal. Verse 21, when her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and fulfill his vow.
- And you're thinking, okay, we're back to where we were at the start of chapter one. They're all going up to worship the Lord. But of course, we're not back to where we were because Hannah doesn't go with them.
- [ 11 : 02 ] In verse 22, Hannah did not go. Hannah is not there. Hannah had always gone to worship the Lord.
- This was woven into her life. Even when it was through tears and through suffering and through heartache, Hannah was always there. This was a priority for her.

Hannah was always prominent. She was prominent in the start of the chapter where she pours out her grief to the Lord. And now she's conspicuous by her absence. And it seems strange to us that she would not go up to worship the Lord after she has had this answer to prayer.

Why not? Why isn't she there? Has she got what she wanted from God? And now she leaves God's shop never to return?

If you looked at Hannah's actions, you could be forgiven for thinking that this was what was going on. If you looked at her in that moment, you'd be forgiven for thinking that she might have cold feet, that she might be drifting from God.

[ 12 : 11 ] But of course, for Hannah, she has the wisdom to realize that this is a different stage in life. This wonderful answer to prayer that God has given her in the shape of her son Samuel means that now she's in a different stage of life.

That life won't just continue as it was. And so in verse 22, we're told after the boy is weaned. In verse 23, it says, stay here until you have weaned him.

At the end of verse 23, until she had weaned him. In verse 24, after he was weaned, in case we missed it, it's highlighting for us this boy needs to be weaned.

This boy is little. He's only a baby. Hannah is at a different stage in life as a result of God's answer to her prayer. And so on the one hand, she continues to be committed to worshipping the Lord.

She has thanked him and acknowledged him. And in verse 22, she says, I will take him and present him before the Lord. That's her commitment. That's her motivation. But at the same time, she recognizes that if she is to do that, the timing of that is important.

[ 13 : 27 ] That this boy needs to be weaned first. And to take him on a long or arduous journey would not be a wise thing to do. And so on the one hand, she has this commitment.

And on the other hand, she realizes that the timing of it is important. If she is going to present Samuel to the Lord forever, a two or three year window at the beginning of that is a wise investment of her time and her energy and her care and her love and her compassion for this boy.

Hannah realizes that the timing is important. Though you may have thought as you looked at her that she was not motivated, that she was not interested. I knew a guy once who caught a mouse with his bare hands.

It wasn't quite with his bare hands. It was apparently with an empty sweet box. So this guy, apparently what happened was he heard a mouse in a cupboard and he thought to himself, okay, I want to catch this mouse.

But what he did was he waited. So he waited and waited. Now perhaps you or I would be tempted to go in with the frying pan or like the farmer's wife to go in with the carving knife or to go in with the empty box there and then but he didn't.

[ 14 : 50 ] He waited until the mouse got a little bit more brave and the mouse kind of nosied his way out of the cupboard and then he waited longer and the mouse, I don't know what the mouse was thinking, maybe he was thinking that this guy was some kind of statue because he was just stationary and the mouse moves closer and closer to him and by the time the mouse realizes this ain't no statue, this guy pounces with a box and catches the mouse.

Now if you had looked at him as he was watching this mouse you would have thought he has no intention of catching this mouse, he's not even moving towards the mouse. Is he not committed to catching the mouse?

But of course timing was everything. If he had moved too quickly the mouse would have been gone. And for Hannah she knows that timing is everything. She's utterly committed to fulfilling her vow to the Lord that Samuel will be given to the Lord.

But she also knows that she needs to wean the child and that the timing of it is important. so she waited until the time was right.

And Elkanah respects that doesn't he? Elkanah respects that. He says to her in verse 23 stay here until you have weaned him only may the Lord make good his word.

[ 16 : 17 ] Elkanah knows his wife to be a woman of integrity, a woman of wisdom, a woman of good motives and so he affirms her stay here until you have weaned him in what she plans to do.

He affirms her motive in that only may the Lord make good his word. This is what Hannah wants as well that the Lord will fulfill his promises and purposes through Samuel.

But Hannah knows the timing is everything. If she had gone up to Eli with a three week old baby and said here you go Eli this is the baby I prayed for over to you and by the way nappies haven't been invented yet it would have been a disaster.

It would have been the right thing but at the wrong time. It would have been the wise thing but at an unwise time. And for us as we see God answering our prayers there's an excitement isn't there?

And there's an enthusiasm and there's a sense of okay what next God? And sometimes we get the timing wrong and we need to realize we're actually at a different stage of life now.

[ 17 : 34 ] I need to pause take a breath and ask okay what now has to change in my life as a result of this answer to prayer? And maybe for you like Hannah it is as the result of having a baby.

Having a little one are little ones. for Hannah what that meant was this period of time where she didn't go up to the temple to worship God. Now Court Baptist Church is not the temple but this is where we come to worship God.

And like Hannah I'm not encouraging you to come up and leave your children here forever as she's doing with Samuel. But there is this reality that as we come to worship God together and as families come with their little ones it's not always easy.

It is very challenging at times to be getting a baby up and out the door. There needs to be this recognition like in the case of Hannah that this is a different stage of life.

That life isn't just going to be as normal. That leaving for church earlier that coming more tired that that's going to be the reality at times.

[ 18 : 51 ] That for some it will mean coming and the baby has thrown up that the baby has been screaming all night that the baby has been nursing a fever. And you know we can do like Elkanah did and applaud those who are looking after little ones recognizing their integrity recognizing their motivations that they want to be here.

but that may not always be possible. That if a baby is sick during the night that it might be wiser to stay and rest and recover at home.

But it's this reality that this is a different stage of life for Hannah. That this is a different stage of life for some in our church family. and we applaud you for being able to get to church with little ones.

We recognize that sometimes it's just not going to happen. And of course it's true not just of parents isn't it? It's true not just of parents. There are those who will be doing shift work.

There are those who are unwell or recovering from surgery. There are times when we won't be able to go up and worship the Lord like Hannah as much as we would love to. And we want to be able to say as a church family that's okay.

[ 20 : 11 ] We recognize your heart. We recognize your motives. We recognize your desire. But that's okay on occasion. Now there's care needed isn't there?

There's care needed in this. Because Hannah's desire was not to stay away forever. It was for a time. And if our norm has become to not come regularly to church to worship the Lord like Hannah or to come late and to leave early, we do need to check our hearts.

Is there a good reason that my hunger has waned? Is there a good reason why my thirst has waned? Is there a good reason why this isn't a priority anymore the way it once was?

us? We need to recognize though that there will be times in life like with Hannah where it is more challenging more difficult that even as a result of answered prayer that we need to adjust our expectations of ourselves above others and to do what we can with integrity before the Lord to worship him.

That's not all that changes. The last thing that changes is this need to follow through on the commitment. Hannah follows through on the commitment.

[ 21 : 36 ] It must have been amazing for Hannah. It must have been difficult for Hannah. In verse 24 the time is right. After he was weaned she took the boy with her young as he was along with a three year old bull and a flower and a skin of wine and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh.

Now this is Hannah's moment to follow through on the commitment that she had made to the Lord. As she does this you recognize that there is a responsibility to Eli a commitment to Eli he had been there when she had prayed!

Back in the day for this little child and now Hannah shares with Eli how God has answered her prayer. She says to him in verse 26 pardon me my Lord as surely as you live I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.

Hannah recognizes that as God has answered her prayer she has this responsibility to bring others along on the journey praise the Lord Eli look at what God has done this is why in our prayer meetings we spend time acknowledging before the Lord and before each other where God has been at work in our lives!

she had spelled it out to God and she follows through on that in verse 28 I give him to the Lord for his whole life he shall be given over to the Lord how hard it must have been for Hannah to follow through on this commitment to God you can imagine her over the couple of years that she had with Samuel how special and precious those moments must have been when the house was empty as Elkanah and Peninah and everybody was gone and it was just Hannah and Samuel and you can imagine what must have been bubbling around in her mind in her heart as she reflected on this commitment that she had made to the Lord that I will give him to the Lord as long as he lives and she does it it's amazing that she does it and the reason that she does it is she knows that

[ 24 : 34 ] God is a generous God God is a God who has shown her grace and favor God is a God to be worshipped she recognizes that Samuel is a gift from the Lord and it is the Lord's character that motivates Hannah to reflect him to be generous to give to the Lord to give Samuel to the Lord part of what Hannah realizes is that it isn't all about her that as special and beautiful and amazing as God's answer to her prayers have been and as individual and personal as they have been that God's answer to her prayers were not just about her that it was about something bigger Hannah was not the consumer leaving the shop having got what she wanted from

God never to see him again this is the mindset that we're in danger of soaking in where we pray and we receive the answer and that's it Hannah recognizes that she has this opportunity to be part of something bigger something greater as she reflects on how God has answered her prayer she knew him to be a giving God a generous God a gracious God she had known him personally to be a God who could work in moments of hopelessness of despair a God who could work where his promises seem to be hanging by a thread she had known him to be a God who loves to thread his promises through the tiniest little gap he is a God who loves to get camels through the eyes of needles

Hannah knew this to be God and she knew that the answer to prayer that he had given her was going to be part of something much greater part of something much bigger and we know this to be true of God as well we know that he is the same God who Hannah worshipped that he would one day give a son not to a married woman who it seemed couldn't conceive but he would one day give a son to a young woman a virgin who wasn't married where there had been hundreds of years of silence from God all of his promises would be threaded through this seemingly impossible window and so that we can say with confidence that he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things and when that sinks into our hearts and our minds we gladly give back to

God generously all that he has given to us we willingly give anything and everything that he asks of us so that we might be welcomed into and invited into this greater work that he is doing when we cling on to the answers to prayer that he gives us and when we consume them for ourselves only it's as though we are afraid that his blessings might dry up that he might never answer our prayers again but when we realize that this God loves to give good gifts to his children that he is a generous abundant and loving God we have the joy not only of receiving answers to our prayers better a blessing and kindness to us but also being able to ask how can I be a blessing to others how can what he has given me be of service to him you've seen this many times

I'm sure then through the years we've seen it in the life of the church family we had a student here a couple of years ago just as an example I mentioned her Elise was her name she came and played the piano for us and was a great blessing many of you remember her fondly she was an example of somebody who came here looking for a church not so much thinking just I want to pray for a church and once she had received that answer to prayer that was it but thinking okay now that I've found a church how can this blessing that I have received be multiplied in my life to be a blessing to others and so she played for us wonderfully and led us in worship as so many do over the years and it is that mindset that is beautiful to see in Hannah it is that mindset that is a joy to cultivate as we reflect the generous giving gracious God who has answered our prayers and so we need to reflect on this we need to think

[ 30 : 03 ] God has answered a prayer that's the start of the adventure that's the start of the journey first of all thank him for it praise him for it like Hannah did but then to reflect and to think what's this going to change in my life what's going to have to be different as a result of this answer to prayer and then to think to multiply his blessings because God loves to give good gifts to his children singular but he also loves to give good gifts to his children plural and the joy we have as a church family is not only being individuals who are saved in Christ but individuals who are saved into a family and so that's what we're invited to reflect on this morning through this passage in Samuel and so we're going to pray and ask

God to help us to continue to do that in the coming days Father we want to thank you and praise you for this story of Hannah and how you graciously answered her prayer graciously and abundantly and generously and Father we praise you that we're reading about her at all but we recognize that that is because she realized Father that in you answering her prayer that was just the beginning of something amazing something wonderful something beautiful and Father we're not in her shoes we're not Hannah and yet Lord we pray you'd give us eyes to see your answers to our prayers and help us to realize that that is just the start of your goodness and kindness and grace to us in particular areas of our lives we ask this in Jesus name Amen Amen Thank you.