

'Hear Our Prayer'
Lent Course 2025 Session 1
Hannah – Personal Prayer

LEADER'S NOTES

Gathering (5 minutes)

Welcome members to the group and ensure they all know each other.

Ask group members what they are hoping to gain from attending this course.

Opening Prayer

You may like to pray by name for every member of the group.

Then lead this or another prayer:

Lord Jesus as you taught your disciples,
so teach us to pray.
Give us honesty in our confession,
ambition in our intercession,
eloquence in our praise and
humility in our thanksgiving.
Help us to trust in the power of prayer,
and as we pray,
give us renewed joy in the hope of your salvation.
For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit
one God for ever and ever.
Amen.

Introduction

Use these or other words:

Welcome to the first of five sessions of our Lent Course, 'Hear our Prayer.' In each session we will seek to deepen our lives of prayer in the company of a character from the Old Testament.

This week we will reflect on the life of Hannah in 1 Samuel and with her reflect on how we can grow in our personal lives of prayer. Let's start by hearing some of Hannah's story.

Biblical Reflection (15 minutes)

Give some background

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, is struggling to conceive a child. In her pain she goes to the Temple. Here is what we read in 1 Samuel 1, 9-18.

Read the passage slowly and clearly.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. ¹¹ She made this vow: '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.'

¹² As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴ So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' ¹⁵ But Hannah answered, '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. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.' ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.' ¹⁸ And she said, 'Let your servant find favour in your sight.'

Leave a time of silence.

Ask the following or similar question:

- What do you notice about Hannah's life of prayer?
- Why do you think Eli assumes that Hannah is drunk?
- What does Hannah teach us about prayer?

Talk (15 minutes)

Watch the Video. It can be seen on the Blackburn Diocesan Website or on the Fruitful app.

Discussion (20-30 minutes)

Lead a time of conversation. The following questions will help but feel free to choose just a few of them or ask your own.

- How would you rate the health of your prayer life?
- What factors make you find personal prayer difficult or challenging?
- When and where do you find it easiest to pray?
- Can you share a time when God has answered your prayer?
- What things do you find it easy to pray about? What things are harder?
- What stops you being honest in prayer?
- When do you pray? What is your own routine or structure of prayer?
- What would help you to develop your life of personal prayer?

Prayer (15 minutes)

This is an exercise to try and help the group to find their own words for prayer without written prayers or a formal liturgy. Some groups will be very well used to this sort of extempore prayer. For others it will be brand new.

First explain what you are going to do in these or other words.

We are going to do some praying in a way that might be new to some of you, simply speaking words of prayer from our hearts without an order of service.

I will name some subjects for prayer and after that I will invite each of you to pray. You can do this very simply, for example just by saying a name or the name of a country. Or you can use a few more words. But remember, be honest before the Lord, confident that he is listening.

Then invite people into a the right frame of mind for prayer.

First, make sure you are sitting comfortably. Let's leave some silence. During this silence listen to your breathing. Try and empty your mind of the worries of the day. Simply be with God.

Listen to these words of scripture:

Jesus says: If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Then name some prayer headings and invite people to speak out their prayers, using as few or as many words as they like. Leave a good period of time after each heading and don't be nervous if at first people are afraid to speak up.

First we will offer God some prayers of thanksgiving. Just speak out loud one thing you want to give thanks to God for as we reach the end of this day...

Next we will pray for those who are sick or whom the Lord has placed on our minds. Just speak the name of someone you know who needs our prayer and, if it feels right, perhaps say why you wish to pray for them...

Next we will pray for our world. Please pray for a situation or a nation which needs prayer at this time...

Next we will pray for the growth of our church. Think of someone you know whom you would love to meet with Jesus, and speak out their name...

Finally we will pray for ourselves and the people we love. Bring to the Lord a family member or a friend who is on your heart right now...

Let's pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

God of Mission
who alone brings growth to your Church,
send your Holy Spirit to give
vision to our planning,
wisdom to our actions,
joy to our worship,

and power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
in spiritual commitment to you,
and in service to our local community,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

May the Lord bless us
and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

If there is time, ask people to share very briefly how that extempore praying felt for them. Was it easy? Challenging? Frightening? Encourage them to make that sort of spontaneous prayer part of their regular routine.

Then send them on their way:

Next we will be looking at Elijah and thinking about how we can show greater ambition in prayer.