STORIES AND RITUALS

LESSON 6

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the the Book of Common Prayer are quoted from the 1979 version of the Book of Common Prayer.

Hannah Prays & Praises God

Texts: **1 Samuel 1-2**

Big Idea: **God responds to our prayers and thanksgivings.**

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify the role of surprise in their lives by playing a game.
2. Recognize God's answering of prayer in our lives by hearing a re-telling of the story of Hannah.
3. Perform an act of prayer by creating a prayer bracelet.

ACTIVITY (TIME)	MATERIALS NEEDED
Dive In (10 minutes) **Group Check-In**	• Nothing
Community Builder (15 minutes) **Picture Telephone**	• Paper • Pens
The Story (15 minutes) **Hannah Prays & Praises God**	• Copy of Lesson Sheet 6.1
The Ritual (15 minutes) **Prayer Bracelets**	• Soft, instrumental music (optional) • Method for playing music (optional) • String • Colored pony beads • Scissors
Dig Deeper (10 minutes) **Prayer Journal**	• Colored construction paper • White copy paper • Markers, crayons, or colored pencils • Stapler and staples
Wrap it Up (5 minutes) **Closing Prayer**	• Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW

What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1-2. Hannah, one of the wives of Elkanah (pronounced el-KAY-nah), did not have any children of her own. Hannah's plight, along with Peninnah's (pronounced puhn-AY-nah) teasing and hurtful actions toward her (for not having children), led Hannah into deep sadness. While at the temple, Hannah begins to pray desperately for a child. When the priest Eli questions her sanity, Hannah continues to be faithful and persistent in her prayers. God hears Hannah's prayers and gives her a son, Samuel, who she sends to live with Eli and serve God.

This story is important in the Biblical narrative as it introduces us to Samuel, one of the important leaders of Israel. Samuel grew up in the temple serving God, and at a young age discerned God's calling in his life. Samuel eventually became a prophet and led the people of Israel. From an early age Samuel dedicated his life to serving God, and his leadership led to the growth of the monarchy in Israel.

What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that *God responds to our prayers and thanksgivings*. In today's story, Hannah prays for a child, and eventually God answers her prayer. Prayer is central to our lives as Christians. We pray in many different forms: we say grace before meals and pray during worship. The the base of our worship is the Book of Common Prayer that contains liturgies, collects, and other services that are rooted deeply in prayer. As people of God, we believe that God listens to us when we pray, and we hope that God will respond to our prayers as seen fit in our lives.

What's the Symbol?

Sometimes individual prayer can be hard, especially for people who need something to help them focus their time with God. There are many different methods people use to focus during their prayer times. Music, candles, icons, prayer beads, journals, prayer books, and other hands-on objects help engage the senses in worship and prayer. Gather several of these different objects, or other things that help you focus during your prayer time. In the ritual and Dig Deeper activity, participants will be invited to create their own focus materials, too.

What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to engage in an act of prayer. While praying during a guided mediation time, each individual will string beads to make a prayer bracelet. Each bead will represent a different petition in their prayer. These bracelets can be worn and used over and over to help guide individual prayer time after the session is over.

Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Cover a large table with a piece of fabric or linen. On the altar place a cross and some candles. Gather some icons, prayer beads, journals, prayer books, or other objects that might help a person focus their prayer time. Place these on the altar. Have string, pony beads, and scissors nearby (you may wish to display them on the altar, too) for the ritual.

DIVE IN
(10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
  Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- **Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week?** Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

COMMUNITY BUILDER
(15 MINUTES)

Picture Telephone

Materials:

- Paper • Pens

During the session:

- Invite the group to sit in a circle. This game works best with 6-10 players, so if your group is large, you may wish to split them into smaller groups.
- **Today we are going to start by playing a game of telephone. But this is a new game of telephone. Start by writing your name in the bottom right hand corner of the paper I will give you.**
- Hand each person a sheet of paper and a pen. Have them write their name on the bottom of the page. Then, instruct them to write a sentence (any sentence they want) at the top of the paper. Encourage silliness or abstract ideas!
- Instruct players to pass their sheet of paper to the person on their right. Then, that person must draw a small picture (it cannot take up the whole page) that illustrates the sentence. This picture should be underneath the original sentence.
- After they have finished drawing, instruct the drawer to fold the sheet of paper so the top sentence is not visible. Then, instruct them to pass the paper to the person to their right.
- The next person must write a sentence underneath the picture that they think describes the picture. After they do this, have them fold the paper so that only the new sentence is visible (the picture should not be seen). After folding, pass it to the right.
- The next person will draw a small picture that they think illustrates the sentence. Then, they continue the folding and passing pattern to the right. Continue moving back and forth between sentences and pictures until either the paper is full or the paper makes it around the circle and returns to the original owner (the person whose name is on the bottom).
- **What was the outcome of passing your sentence around the circle? Was it what you expected?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **Has there ever been a time in your life when the final outcome of an experience or situation has surprised you? What happened?** *[Answers will vary.]*

THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

Hannah Prays & Praises God

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 6.1

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 6.1.
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 6.1.
- After the story, ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God listens to our prayers; God answers our prayers.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We have thoughts, needs and wants that we bring to God through our prayers; we trust that God will listen to us and answer our prayers.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: There are people in the world who might not understand why we are so persistent in prayer.]*
- **Hannah trusted that God would listen to her prayers and answer them. Even when Eli questioned her actions, Hannah still prayed, and God answered her prayer.**

THE RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Prayer Bracelets

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- String
- Colored pony beads
- Scissors

During the session:

- If you have not done so, light the candle on your altar area. If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **We all have prayers and thanksgivings that we bring to God. However, sometimes it's hard for us to pray persistently. There are many different things that can help us with our prayer time. Today we are going to make something that can help us be persistent in prayer.**
- Cut a length of string for each person in the group. Place the beads in a spot where everyone can reach them (you may wish to place several containers of beads throughout the group).
- **In a moment, I am going to guide you through some prayers. After I introduce each prayer, silently pray your own prayer. As you pray, string a bead on your string.**
- Pause for a moment. Then, begin. **Today, we praise God for who God is.** Pause and allow the group to pray. **We thank God for someone in our lives.** Pause for prayer. **We thank God for something that inspired us this week.** Pause for prayer. **We pray for forgiveness of our sins.** Pause for prayer. **We pray for someone who needs healing.** Pause for prayer. **We pray for a need in our world.** Pause for prayer. **We pray for our own personal needs**. Pause for prayer. **Hear our supplications, O God, and grant those that you see fit for our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**
- Invite everyone to tie off the bracelet and wear it.
- **Wear this bracelet every day. Use the beads to help you persistently send your thanksgivings and prayers to God.**

DIG DEEPER
(10 MINUTES)

Prayer Journal

Materials:

- Colored construction paper
- White copy paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Stapler and staples

Before the session:

- Make a sample journal to show the group.

During the session:

- **Another tool that helps us see how God answers our prayers is a prayer journal.**
- Show the group the sample journal you have made. **You write in a prayer journal every day. In the journal, you write the prayer requests you have for that day, and how God has answered your prayers.**
- Hand each person a sheet of construction paper. Invite them to fold the colored construction paper to make the cover of the journal. They may draw, write, or color on the cover to personalize the journal.
- Hand each person several sheets of white paper. Invite them to fold the paper and slip it inside the cover of the journal. Staple the pages together to create a booklet.
- **What prayer requests do you have? Has God answered any of your prayers today? Take a moment to write these things in your journal.**

WRAP IT UP
(5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. If you created prayer journals, you may wish to share what the group wrote. Then, close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

Amazing God, you listened to Hannah and answered her prayers. Hear our prayers and remind us that you will always listen to us, no matter what we say. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Lesson Sheet 6.1

Hannah Prays & Praises God

(1 Samuel 1-2)

There once was a man named Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives: Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah didn't.

Each year, Elkanah left his home to worship God in Shiloh. He worshipped God through sacrifice, and each year he would give a portion of the sacrifice to Peninnah and her children. But, Elkanah would give a larger portion to Hannah because he loved her, even though she didn't have any children. Peninnah, however, made fun of Hannah every year, because she didn't have any children; every year this happened, and every year Hannah would cry and not eat. This worried Elkanah, and he asked Hannah why she was so sad.

One time, after they had eaten and drunk, Hannah went to God and began to pray. The priest, named Eli, was sitting nearby and watched Hannah. She prayed and cried, saying, "Lord, remember me! Remember your servant who is in pain and misery. If you bless me with a male child, I will give him to you to be your servant. He will be yours until the day of his death."

Eli watched Hannah as she prayed. Now, Hannah was praying silently; the priest could see her lips move, but didn't hear a sound. He thought that she was drunk. Eli said to her, "How long will you act like you've had too much to drink? Put away your wine!" But Hannah replied, "I am not drunk, sir. I'm just sadly praying to God. I have only been telling God about my fears and frustrations." Then Eli said to Hannah, "Go in peace. God will listen to your prayers and answer them." And Hannah left to find her family, and she was no longer sad.

The next morning, Elkanah and his family worshipped God. Then, they left for their home. After they were home, Hannah conceived and had a child; a son who she named Samuel, meaning "I asked the Lord for him."

The next time Elkanah and his family left to offer their yearly worship and sacrifice, Hannah did not go with them. Instead, she told her husband that she would bring Samuel when he was ready to be presented to God. When the boy was old enough, Hannah brought him to Eli, offering him to God. She said to Eli, "I am the woman who prayed to God for this child. God answered my prayer, so now I give my child to be with the Lord for as long as he lives."

Hannah offered Samuel and worshipped God. She praised God for listening to her and for being faithful. She rejoiced in God for blessing her and looking with favor upon her, a lowly servant.

After worshipping God, Elkanah and his family went home, but Samuel stayed behind. He served God under the instruction of Eli, the priest.