

# FOLLOWING GOD'S TIMING

**+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God's people are to recognize and rejoice in His provisions while being quick to use what has been given for His purposes.

**+ BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

1 Samuel 1-3

**+ SETTING:**

As the days of the judges were coming to a close, the people of Israel were mired in national tragedy as the downward spiral of the nation reached rock bottom. In those days, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judg. 21:25). But there was still reason for hope because God is faithful, so there always remains faithful people. For example, an ordinary man and his family were faithful to worship and sacrifice to the one true and living God (1 Sam 1:3). The story that follows this man's wife Hannah shows once again that God never gives up on His mission of restoration.

# DAY 1

**READ:**

**1 Samuel 1:1-18**

**FOCAL PASSAGE:**

**1 Samuel 1:9-11**

NOTES

Waiting is a part of life. Not a fun part but a reality nonetheless. We spend a lot of time waiting for certain people or circumstances we find important. We wait for the right job, the right spouse, the right path forward. Often we have in our minds the ideal means of getting from where we are to where we want to be, but it sometimes seems that God drags His feet.

Hannah surely felt such sorrow. We are not given a timeline on the process that led to the birth of Samuel, but we know Hannah desired a son for years. She had watched others around her have children, and still she had none. She was depressed and despondent, a state of mind provoked and exacerbated by her rival, Peninnah, who had children.

Yet Hannah prayed.

Hannah's example here helps us distinguish between two forms of waiting: passive and active. Passive waiting occurs when we throw in the towel and just figure eventually something good might happen. We stop doing the practices that bring us to God, such as prayer and worship. We just resign ourselves to whatever happens and refuse to hope because we think God doesn't care.

Active waiting, on the other hand, is based on a firm confidence in the nature and character of God. Active waiters continue to take steps to do the right things, even when it might not seem that God is listening. Active waiters continue to pray, even when they ask for the same things year after year. They continue to worship God because of His character and not simply because He gives them what they want. They resist the temptation to hope less. Instead, they trust that God will providentially intervene in His time and in His way, and they trust that will be good, whenever and however it happens, because they know God cares.

**How does your understanding of who God is affect the way you wait upon Him?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

1 Samuel 1:19-28

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 1:20

## NOTES

What's in a name? The answer, at the least in the Bible, is that names are packed with significance. In the days before Internet searches for top baby names, people chose names based off their meanings. The people of God often would base the names of their children on some aspect of God's character and activity in the world.

Samuel's name meant either "God has heard" or "The name of God." In either case, Elkanah and Hannah made a theological claim in the name they chose for their son. He was an answer to prayer, given to them by God and offered back to God for His purposes. Even before they took Samuel to be dedicated in the temple, they etched his life's mission in his name—he would be devoted to God.

Your name might have similar significance. Your parents may have selected your name on the basis of God's faithfulness or character. Or maybe yours is a family name based on a model whom your parents hoped you'd emulate. Whether there's significance in your given name or not, there is another name given to all of God's people.

As believers, we belong to Jesus Christ. We are "Christians" (Acts 11:26). This name denotes our life's mission. We are claimed by Christ to represent Christ in the world. We must not take this name in vain (Ex. 20:7). We are called to holy living because it's a right reflection of our holy God and Savior. We represent Jesus in this world, and conversely, we can misrepresent Him through waywardness and folly. Like Samuel, we bear the name of God, and we should strive to wear it well.

**What would change about your life if you were more aware of the fact that you bear Christ's name?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

1 Samuel 1

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 1:24-28

NOTES

Elkanah and Hannah offered a sacrifice of praise through the bull they brought to the Lord's house. These two ideas—sacrifice and praise—are connected through two themes in this passage. First, Elkanah and Hannah understood that approaching the holy God required a blood sacrifice. The ongoing worship system in the temple was supposed to etch this reality into the minds of all worshipers. Something must die because of sin. This family's sacrifice declared that Elkanah, Hannah, and even baby Samuel were born sinners who do sinful things. Though Samuel would serve God in the temple, his purity wasn't like God's. He was a sinner who could only worship because something had died in his place.

Second, worshipers were meant to see worship as costly. They were giving up something in order to worship God. The animals and goods they offered were not cheap. They weren't unused extras easy to discard. They were costly. The language of sacrifice denotes this reality. We give something up when we follow God.

This latter idea is important for us to consider on a regular basis. Jesus pointed out the costly nature of Christian discipleship. It involves self-denial, a proverbial cross, and the expectation—even reality—of losing one's life (Matt. 16:24-25). To follow Jesus is to live a life of costly sacrifice from the start of the Christian journey and throughout. Sacrifice is a mark of ongoing faithfulness to Jesus' way.

Worship is meant to come at a cost. The first cost was taken on by God Himself. The only means by which we can worship Him is because of the price He paid in the death of His Son. The next cost falls to us as we willingly sacrifice our rights, our resources, even our very lives to show the world that God is worth it.

**How will you model sacrificial worship of God in your life?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

1 Samuel 2:1-11

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 2:1

## NOTES

It's probably been a while since you've heard someone say, "My heart exults," or "My heart rejoices." We don't speak that way often. Interestingly enough, we are more apt to use language that communicates the opposite: "I'm discouraged, disheartened, depressed, defeated, and downcast." All of these words communicate the fact that our hearts aren't exulted.

The reason behind Hannah's claim that her heart rejoiced is the basis for our hope as well. She said that her heart exulted "in the LORD." Consider an alternative: "My heart exults in my circumstances." When good things happen, we naturally have an exulted heart. We feel good. Alive. Hopeful. But we clearly see the problem with a heart set on circumstances—they quickly change from good to worse. If the basis of our joy and hope is found in circumstances, then our heart fluctuates along with them.

Recall that Hannah had felt angry, resentful, and even despondent (1:8,10,15-16). She was barren with little hope for this to change. Yet she got up the next day after praying and worshiped the Lord (1:19). Is it possible to rejoice in the Lord when circumstances are unfavorable? Yes, if the exultation is actually in the Lord and not in the circumstances.

Unlike our circumstances, the Lord does not change. He is not fleeting. His character is steady and consistent. We do not have to wonder if God got up on the wrong side of the bed or if His love for us has waned. He's faithful to His promises and committed to accomplishing the salvation of His people. He's at work to finish the good work that He started in our lives (Phil. 1:6). It's not wrong to feel discouraged or depressed when life takes a hard turn, but we don't have to wait until our circumstances change to find joy. Our hearts should exult in the Lord, for He never changes.

**What reasons do you have to rejoice in the Lord today, regardless of your circumstances?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"This constitutes the pinnacle of human dignity, this is his glory and greatness: truly to know what is great and to cleave to it, and to seek after glory from the Lord of glory."<sup>1</sup>

-Basil the Great (c. 330-379)

# DAY 5

## READ:

1 Samuel 2:1-11

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 2:6

## NOTES



### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #30: GOD'S PROVIDENCE

*Providence* refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes, in various degrees, God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Gen. 8:21-22). Christians believe the world, and even the cosmos itself, is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the natural order but also the individuals and events within human history.

How often do you think about death? If you are like most people, you likely try to avoid thoughts of death until you are reminded of its inevitable approach, such as through losing a loved one or facing a looming, dire diagnosis. The ancient foe—death—is an unavoidable reality, but we'd still rather not think about it.

The Bible, however, takes another approach.

Throughout the story of Scripture, we see continual mentions of the eternal fate of people in light of their sin and the holiness of God. First Samuel 2:6 reminds us that God holds the power over life and death. He gives life and He takes it away (Job 1:21). Such is the extent of God's control of the world and of all the things He has made.

What should grappling with the reality of death produce in people? There are two answers. First, the reality of death should produce repentance and faith. When asked about the tragic death of people who were crushed under a falling tower, Jesus said simply that their deaths should cause His hearers to repent because death comes for us all (Luke 13:1-5). God holds the power of life and death, and He has told us that the path to avoid eternal death is repentance and faith in Christ. Death should jar us to acknowledge our sin, turn from it, and trust in the work of Jesus to forgive (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1-5; John 3:16).

Second, the reality of death should push us to share the good news of Jesus with all those on the wide path to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). We know the brevity of life and the dire fate awaiting those who reject Jesus, so we should implore all people to turn to God in Christ and be saved before it's too late (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

**Are you trusting in Jesus for your salvation and inviting others to find eternal life through Him? Will you begin today?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"My advice to you is take your difficulty before God in prayer, and say, 'Speak, Lord; for your servant hears.' Do not ask God to confirm your opinion, but ask Him to make your opinion conformable with His Truth ... Follow the simple Word of God as you find it and rest assured you shall have the Light of the Holy Spirit streaming upon the sacred page. And as you read it you shall hear the Master say, 'This is My Word.'"<sup>2</sup>

-Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

### **POINT 1: The Lord's servant pleads for a son** (1 Sam. 1:4-6,11-18).

The Lord intervened in the family of Elkanah in a way that might trouble us: He withheld the joy of children from Hannah. This led to much tension in Elkanah's family, yet we must \_\_\_\_\_ that God is \_\_\_\_\_.

Hannah took her \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord and begged Him for a son, whom she promised would serve the Lord. Her prayer led to a renewed sense of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in God.

**?** How does prayer help us deal with our struggles?

### **POINT 2: The Lord's servant dedicates a long-awaited son** (1 Sam. 1:19-20,24-28).

Hannah prayed to the Lord for a son in her grief, and the answer to her prayer \_\_\_\_\_ came according to God's perfect \_\_\_\_\_.

**?** How have you seen God's perfect timing on display in your life?

Hannah honored her vow to the Lord and dedicated her son to the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_. This reflected her commitment to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord \_\_\_\_\_.

### **POINT 3: The Lord's servant celebrates a divinely provided son** (1 Sam. 2:1-2,6).

Hannah fulfilled her difficult vow because God is worthy of all \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Only in the Lord do we find \_\_\_\_\_.



What are some things we should be able to do because of who God is?

### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #30: GOD'S PROVIDENCE

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What are some ways God's providence in your life has prompted you to worship Him?

### MY RESPONSE

Because we have experienced the power of the Word of God leading to our salvation, we listen carefully to what God says to us in His Word and share its truth with those around us.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways Old Testament deliverers fell short in their deliverance, and how is Jesus the better solution?
- **HEART:** What are some reasons you have to declare your praise to the Lord, and how might those opportunities open doors for the gospel to be shared?
- **HANDS:** How will you be an agent of God's activity in the world this week?

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth, To Thy Word I now give heed; Life and spirit Thy Word beareth, All Thy Word is true indeed. Death's dread pow'r in me is rife; Jesus, may Thy Word of Life Fill my soul with love's strong fervor That I cling to Thee forever."<sup>3</sup>

-Anna Sophia of Hesse  
(1638-1683)