

# PRAYER

1 Samuel 2:1-10

Our Prophetic Proclamation of Prayer

## Introduction

We reach, so soon, the last week of our month-long June “Prayer” series, in which the Lord has called us into a more intentional season of prayer. In this series, we have sat deeply with the model of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, pondered the intimacy of prayer and of God’s knowledge of us in Psalm 139, and meditated upon the focus of prayer in grasping God’s great love in Ephesians 3.

In this last week, as we sit under the preaching of Pastor Rebecca, we look at the incredible portrait of prayer found in Hannah’s praise and petition before Yahweh in 1 Samuel 2. We find in these verses an inspiring example of the power of prayer as prophetic proclamation—of speaking forth the true realities of God and this world.

## Connection Group Study

### COMMENTARY STUDY

v. 1. Hannah’s prayer begins with a profound declaration of Hannah’s commitment to the Lord through a powerful exclamation with regards to body parts: “my heart,” “my horn,” and “my mouth.” The language used here suggests the intimacy of personal experience.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

v. 1. *Study*: Do you know the literary context of our passage on prayer? One cannot read Hannah’s prayer well without getting a sense of where we are in 1 Samuel by skimming Samuel 1, so as to recognize our literary context of the story of Hannah and Elkanah.

Of exegetical interest: the first Hebrew word for “exults” — **אֲלַט** (*alats*) is a relatively rare word of Hebrew poetry used mainly in the Psalms to describe the praises of the righteous of God, of those who take refuge in him. Here, together with **רָמָה** (*ramah*) — the much more common Old Testament word for “being exalted” or “being high” — *alats* begins a sense of vertical moment present throughout the prayer. In this sense of vertical movement is used the word for “horn” **קֶרֶן** (*qeren*), expressing metaphorically the idea of power and strength, as of, for instance, an animal’s horn — an expression that David uses in 2 Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 18:2 in proclaiming God to be his “the horn of salvation.”

v. 2. Hannah expresses the uniqueness and the incomparability of our God in terms of God’s holiness. The poetic expression of the Lord as our “rock” (**צוּר**, *tsur*) is a common one in Hebrew poetry, as an image of divine strength and refuge.

v. 3. The theme of vertical orientation is again emphasized, as the word for “proudly” **גְּבוּהָה** (*gebohah*) most literally expresses, like the vocabulary of verse 1, “being high” or “lifted high” — as in,

*Study:* In recognizing the literary context of Samuel 1, it is near impossible not to consider other biblical examples of bareness, as a sort of biblical motif. You may find it helpful to reread briefly the accounts of Sarah in Genesis 18 and Elizabeth in Luke 1.

*Discuss:* Based on the nature of her prayer in 1 Samuel 1:10-11, and based upon her conversation with Eli the priest in 1:14-18, how do think the narrator is characterizing Hannah?

*Reflect:* Before Hannah’s heart was filled with exaltation in chapter 2, it was filled with “affliction” in chapter 1:11. How is your heart, in these summer months, crying out that affliction may be turned to exaltation?

v. 2. *Praise:* Encourage one another: How have you discovered the Lord our God to be a rock in times past and in times present?

*Confess:* in what ways have you recently been tempted to forget the truth that the Lord is our rock?

*Study:* One of the most extended portraits of God as “rock” is written in Psalm 18. Read that psalm now for encouragement.

v. 3. *Pray:* Pray that the knowledge of God would lead, by his grace, to the kind of songs of praise that Hannah is singing here.

“speak not loftiness.” So, then, the warning against arrogance is expressed as a command against our own exaltation. And why are we not to lift high our own speech? The answer lies in the knowledge of the Lord, one who intimately knows our “actions”/“deeds”, and also—as expressed throughout Scripture—our hearts behind our deeds.

v. 4-5. That the Lord is a God of knowledge who weighs the actions of the world has—in the prophetic, poetic voice of Hannah—real implications for this world in terms of the reverses and contrasts that are realized by the hand of the lord. Here these reverses are spoken of in terms of military might, hunger, and fertility. Of note, verse 4 b translates most literally as “the ones who are stumbling equip themselves with the strength [of God, implied]”: in the succinctness of just three Hebrew words, *we-nichshalim azeru chayil*, it is a beautiful portrait of the sustaining and renewing strength of God.

v. 6. As if the images of God’s reversals of military might, hunger, and fertility were not enough, Hannah goes on to proclaim the truth that Yahweh’s knowledge and power extend even over life and death. Even *Sheol*, that realm of the dead, cannot contain the authority of the God who holds life and death in his hands.

*Confess*: How have you succumbed this week to the temptation of speaking or thinking in an overly high sense of yourself, apart from the perspective-giving knowledge of the Lord?

v. 4-5. *Meditate*: How is verse 4 speaking good news to you this week? In what sense might you be stumbling and tottering, looking to equip yourself with the strength of God?

*Pray*: Pray that all your hungers would find satisfaction in the Lord, and that the Spirit would reveal the true points of hunger in your life.

*Discuss*: The “seven sons” motif was popular in the ancient Near East (as expressed in Ruth 4:15). It is here used as a poetic expression of perfection made out of weakness by the hand of the Lord. Translating across the centuries, how might we, ruminating upon God’s faithfulness, express this idea with modern phrasing/sensibilities?

v. 6. *Reflect*: How have you been inspired, in your own personal life in the past, by the “*Sheol*-raising” power of God—by the ability of God to bring life from death? Encourage one another by sharing.

vv. 7-8. The ongoing themes of vertical orientation and poetic reversals come together here in what Eugene Peterson has termed in his commentary, “the perspective of the underdog” (p. 25). The underdog is he who is raised up from the dust, lifted up from the rubbish to inherit—by the Lord’s hand—seats of honour. Such is the power of the Lord our God who has done no less than put the world in place!

vv. 9-10. As a prayerful voice of prophetic proclamation, Hannah speaks of the protection and judgment of the Lord as a thunder from heaven, a proclamation that will ultimately set the stage for his king and anointed one. In this way, she prophetically anticipates not only Saul and David in Israel’s narrative, but King and Messiah Jesus in the whole world’s narrative.

Hannah Presenting Samuel  
to Eli  
Gerbrand van den Eeckhout  
1660s  
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vv. 7-8. Pray: Pray that FBC would continue to participate in practical ways in this powerful prophetic proclamation of the reversal of the Lord—of the poor lifted up to places of honour—and this not only in terms of our shelter program downtown, but also in terms of how we love our local neighbourhoods through greater Vancouver.

*Discern:* In terms of the people and places that God has already put in your life, how can you and your Connection Group organically express unto your neighbourhood the good news of these verses—that the Lord makes rich the poor? What might be one relationship with which you could start?

vv. 9-10. Study: Regarding the poetic and prophetic voice, what elements of Hannah’s song do you see in Mary’s Luke 1 Magnificat?

*Discuss:* We return to the Hebrew word for “horn,” *qeren*, in this final verse, as a sort of bookends of Hannah’s prayer. How has the imagery around “horn” been fleshed out throughout this whole prayer?

*Listen:* End your time listening to Hannah’s prayer as set to guitar by Jason Silver (as on YouTube). Which parts of the song is the Spirit putting most strongly on your heart?

