

# SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

“FROMTO Book of 1 Samuel”  
Prayer Vows (1 Samuel 1-2)  
Questions written by Mark Collins  
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

I just want to say a huge “thank you” to everyone who attended our leadership luau last weekend. It was the bomb! We were entertained by a ukulele band, Polynesian worship dancers, and a native Hawaiian drum team. The food was off the hook and the hula contest was a riot. Hopefully the brief training session was helpful. At the luau, I gave away a small group curriculum that I recently published. It walks a small group through the five stages of group life by looking at how the Corinthian church experienced relational growth as they eventually became a healthy body. I’d like to make this curriculum available to you free of charge while supplies last. Maybe, you’ve been following the sermon questions a long time and its time to make a change. This would be a great opportunity to try something a little different. Also, I just want to publicly thank my team members that made this great event happen. So I salute, Brandon Fries, Hanson Lee and especially Danah Davis and the numerous volunteers who made this night possible. You did an amazing job! Next week we’ll be giving you the date for our next connection event and our upcoming new leadership training. If you’re interested in receiving the free curriculum just call 619-764-5191 or email us at [danah.davis@therocksandiego.org](mailto:danah.davis@therocksandiego.org) and we’ll get the study guide right out to you.

Small Group leaders, are you encouraging your group members to join the Rock Army? Your group can catch the vision of becoming a part of a movement that encourages people to become World-Class Christians. To join, check out the ARMY requirements at [www.therocksandiego.org/army/](http://www.therocksandiego.org/army/)

## MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

*As “small groupies,” you are the heart and soul of this ministry--who better than you to lift up the Small Group Ministry in prayer? So, it’s up to you, you can spend time in your small group praying for these things (weekly or occasionally), or you can pray during the week on your own time. If you’d like to be added to our Pastor’s Prayer Team, just let us know. Mark Collins, the Small Group Pastor, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of his personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at [andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org](mailto:andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org). May God work through your prayers mightily!*

**Reaching the Lost:** Pray that all the small groups continue to develop relationships with those who are far from God, and invite them to their small groups.

**Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups:** Pray that all of our Small Groups take time to follow up on all the new people trying to get into small groups.

**Potential Small Group Leaders:** Pray that our current leaders continue to give their ministry away and develop future leaders to reach their full potential in Jesus.

**The Rock Body:** Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in accountability to one another.

## MEMORY VERSE

*“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9)*

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – PRAYER VOWS

When you think about life all it is, really, is a constant continuum of movement between where you been to where you’re headed. Or in other words, where you’re *FROM* to where you’re going. The OT history of the Bible is simply just an account of how God intervened in the lives of His people; changing where they were from so that He could change their final destination. Since 1 Samuel is a historical book it’s important to understand where it fits in the history of Israel. 1 Samuel closes the period of the judges and marks the period of the kings of Israel. At this time, the greatest threat to the Israelites was the Philistines. Their trouble began in the days of Samson and continued until there was centralized leadership under David. The superiority of the Philistines was mostly due to their metal technology. The production of iron was limited to the Philistines during this time in Palestine and so the production of metal weapons gave their armies superiority. 1 Samuel 13:19-22 tells us that Israel went to the Philistines for all of their metal work from plow-shares to spears. When Saul and Jonathan went into battle it is said that they were the only two who had a sword and spear. By 1000 B.C. (the end of 1 Samuel and beginning of 2 Samuel) David finally broke the yoke of the Philistines and the golden age of Israel under David and Solomon reached its zenith.

The book of 1 Samuel can be broken down into four periods: two judges, Eli and Samuel and two kings, Saul and David. It opens with the birth and dedication of Samuel, and ends with Saul’s defeat and death at his own hands before the Philistines could have their way with him. In between, the book is primarily a story of great beginnings and unfortunately, some tragic endings. Eli’s and his son’s death marked the decline of the influence of the priesthood in Israel and the loss of the Ark of the Covenant to their sworn enemy which became a symbol of their poor leadership. Like Eli, Samuel wasn’t immune to finishing poorly. Samuel’s sons turned away from God, took bribes and perverted justice. In response, the people rejected the leadership of the judges and the priests and clamored for a king “like all the other nations had” (8:5).

Saul also started quickly. A striking figure, “head and shoulders above the rest” (9:2) was God’s choice as Israel’s first king. His early reign was marked by effective leadership and bravery, but eventually he disobeyed God and became jealous and paranoid. Saul’s life continued to spiral steadily downward. He became obsessed with killing David (chapters 19-30), consulted a medium (chapter 28) and finally committed suicide (chapter 31). Another great beginner was David who was said of God as a being a “man after his own heart.” David ministered to Saul, killed Goliath, and became a great poet-warrior; yet he had a little problem finishing well also. But we’ll have to wait until the book of 2 Samuel to see the details about how David finished.

Sadly, many people in our culture think history is just plain boring. They have awful memories of trying to memorize timelines and dates of events that seem to have little to no bearing on their modern-day lives. God included historical books such as 1 Samuel not just to lend authenticity to the bible, but to offer revolutionary insights into the character of God. Classic stories like David and Goliath and the grace that David extends towards Saul still teach us how to live today. As you follow the lives of the Israelites during the period of Samuel, I am praying that you’ll desire a deeper relationship with God and these stories will leave you longing to know more of Him.

## PRAYER VOWS

## ***Getting Started***

Have you ever desired something so desperately that you felt like you'd do about anything just to get it? Have you ever made yourself sick, begging God just to answer your one prayer? That's where Hannah finds herself at the opening of the book of 1 Samuel. She had suffered a long time with a closed womb which was one of the greatest curses a woman could endure in the ancient Middle Eastern world.

Begin this session by asking your group to relate a time when they prayed specifically for something that at the time seemed to go unanswered but later were glad that things didn't turn out like they prayed.

## ***Digging Deeper:***

Ask someone in your group to read 1 Samuel 1:1-8.

1. Has God ever led you into a time of great disappointment before granting your heart's desire? Please explain. What clues from the text lets us know that God was orchestrating these events?
2. Read 1:9-10. We often feel conflict between what we want and what we think God wants and we may have mixed motives when we pray or why we pray for things. What internal conflicts or mixed motives might Hannah have experienced as she prayed?
3. How do you think the way that God answers prayer is affected by the purity of our motives?
4. We can almost expect God to answer certain kind of prayers with a no. What are some of these kinds of prayers (Don't punk out on this question and answer it by saying: "Those against His will," be more specific)?
5. Verse 11 reveals Hannah's dangerous prayer. Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. What did Hannah risk by making a vow? Have you ever made a vow to God? What happened?
6. Verses 10-16 demonstrate Hannah's honesty in prayer to God. She does not hide her feelings of pain, hurt or desire. What are some of the barriers that prevent you from being this direct with God when you are in similar situations?
7. Read 1:18-20. How did Hannah's mood change? Have you ever wrestled with God and then finally found peace? What was that like? For confirmation of her peace look at Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10

## ***Bringing it Home***

Intellectually we know that God always answers our prayers. Frankly, there's only three ways that God can respond to our requests. First, if the request is wrong, God will say "no"! Sometimes what seems to be unanswered prayer is actually answered prayer. It's just that the answer is no. We are all capable of making requests that are immature, shortsighted or materialistic. We can even pray for good things (like healing) but God may decide that there's a greater good to be found in suffering. Secondly, sometimes the timing is wrong, and God says, "Slow!" God is not the "god of instant gratification." He doesn't work on our timetable. He has a plan to mature us and bring Himself ultimate glory (which by the way is best for us). Lastly, at times we are not ready to receive his answer so the sad truth is: If we are wrong, God says, "Grow!" There are myriad of blessings that God wants to pour out on us. Unfortunately, our immaturity limits Him, because at this point in our lives these blessings could become curses by getting us off track, moving us away from God instead of towards Him.

End this session by thanking Him for answering your prayers. Ask Him to reveal to you a time when He said, “No, slow and grow.” Thank Him for his wisdom and for loving you enough to protect you from your own prayers. Then, identify one or two prayers that you have been lifting up to God for a long time. Let Him know you’re willing to wait on Him. Promise to continue praying and ask Him to help you not to lose heart.