

## International Conversation Cafe

Community Group:                    Why and How Should I Pray?

### Examples of Prayer: Hannah

Growing in a relationship with God is a lot like growing in relationship with others. Communication skills are essential. When we read the Bible, we learn to listen to God. When we speak to God, he listens to us. The following are examples of how speaking to God made a difference in the life of ordinary people.

The first example is Hannah, found in I Samuel 1. Give out the parts and read and or act out as a skit.

**Narrator**                    There was a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

**Elkanah**                    Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

**Narrator**                    Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow.

**Hannah**                    Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

**Narrator**                    As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk,

**Eli**                    How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

**Hannah**                    Not so, my lord. I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.

**Eli**                    Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.

**Hannah**                    May your servant find favor in your eyes.

**Narrator**                    Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

**Narrator** After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli.

**Hannah** Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.

**Narrator** Every year, Hannah would go with her husband back to the temple, and she would take a robe that she made him as a gift. Eli would pray for them each year, and Hannah had more children, 3 Sons and 2 daughters.

Samuel grew up to be the greatest prophet in Israel's history, with great power and influence, all because of Hannah's prayer and promise to God!

### **Example of Prayer: Nehemiah**

**Nehemiah** In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, so the king asked me,

**King** "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

**Nehemiah** I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

**King** "What is it you want?"

**Nehemiah** Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

**King** "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?"

**Nehemiah** "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?"

And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

*What are some similarities between these two stories?*

*How did prayer make a difference in the lives of Nehemiah and Hannah?*

In your groups, continue the conversation about prayer using the following guide.

## A Pattern for Prayer

Prayer is simply talking to God. Communication is what makes relationships work because we express to the other person what we are thinking and feeling in a way that shows respect for the other person. The following Scripture gives us a guideline of how to speak to God. It is an invitation to grow close to him.

### Psalm 50: 14-15

**“Bring me thank offerings, because I am your God.”**

*Why do you think it is important to give thanks to God?*

*When we thank God, we express our faith in his goodness. How does giving thanks help us?*

*Can you tell about a time when you gave thanks, even when it was difficult?*

**“Carry out the promises you made to me, because I am the Most High God.”**

*What kind of promises do people make to God?*

*Do you think it is a good idea to make promises to God?*

**“Call out to me when trouble comes. I will save you. And you will honor me.”**

*Name some troubles people face today.*

*Why do you think God wants us to ask him for help?*

*What is God’s promise?*

*Can you tell about a time when God answered your prayer for help?*



Millet, Jean-François. The Angelus. C. 1857, Oil on canvas. 5.5 x 6.6 cm. Musee d'Orsay. Paris, France

### Time to practice?

In your group, let each one who desires, say thank you in one sentence for something they are truly grateful for.

In one sentence, ask for God’s help with a difficulty you are facing.