Quiet
Heroes of the Faith

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Introduction

In our era of great challenge, the Heroes of the Faith series highlights men and women in the Bible who overcame extraordinary difficulties. Their stories show that God chooses ordinary people—people like you—to do His extraordinary work.

The authors have taken special care not to elevate these Bible characters inappropriately. God is the true hero of each Bible story! Each session focuses on God’s mercy in people’s lives, especially the mercy shown through Jesus Christ.

These lessons will introduce you to the cultural setting and life story of a biblical character, examine the joys and challenges that person faced, and show how God forgave, sustained, and empowered that person to serve Him. Concluding activities will lead you in reviewing God’s blessings in your own life.
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Cultural Setting

“Father, soon we will finish harvesting the barley. Shall we begin gathering branches for our booth?” asked Keliah as he placed a bag of grain on the cart.

“Yes, son. We will need branches from myrtle, palm, and willow trees for the booth, and find some citrons to attach to the festal plume we will make—our lullab. The load must not be too heavy to carry to Shiloh; however, Mother will want a comfortable shelter where we can live for seven days.”

“Yes, our ancestors lived in booths for forty years. Our temporary booths remind me of them. And, I can hardly wait for our celebrations during the feast.”

“Be careful, though, not to drink too much wine. You have seen young and old alike who turn God’s celebration into a feast of revelry.”

“I know, father. I have seen the indulgence of the Canaanites. However, I am thankful that God has given us a generous harvest, and I wish to celebrate those blessings.”

Meet a Hero

“I am called Hannah, wife of Elkanah. I’m so thankful that I get a chance to speak. Everything in my life has changed, and I have so much to tell! You see, in the past, no one listened to me very much. I was a woman who could not have a child, and around here that is pretty important; and nowhere more so than in my own home. I don’t mean my husband, Elkanah; he loved me; and he made that very clear. He never blamed me for not having children, and he used to tease me when I would get upset, and say, ‘Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?’ But Peninnah had sons and daughters and never let me forget it. I became known as Elkanah’s childless wife, and Peninnah, the wife with children.

“Do you know what it is like to want something so much that it actually hurts? That’s how I felt most of the time. Oh, I tried not to focus on it, but it seemed that everywhere I looked, I saw babies and pregnant women, cute little toddlers playing at their mother’s feet. I heard story after story of labor and delivery, but I never had my own to tell. I knew that I needed to trust in the Lord, and put my faith in Him,
but it became harder when every month I would pray and hope and then feel even more disappointment.

“Year after year we would go to the tabernacle and I would pray, and year after year Peninnah would laugh and jeer at me, because I never had any children. It was always worse at those times, because we would see all of our friends with their new children and growing families. I tried to celebrate God’s blessings to us in the past year, but as I watched all those new mothers, my heart was full of sorrow. I was happy for them, but I longed to have my own baby at my breast.

“Last year, at the tabernacle, I just couldn’t take it any more. Elkanah tried to comfort me, but it was no use. I felt bitter and betrayed. After our meal, I began to weep and pray to the Lord. I had prayed often before, but this time I felt so much anguish, I poured out everything in my heart. I even made a vow to the Lord. I promised Him that if He would remember me, and give me a son, I would give Him back and devote that child to God’s service. I know that sounds crazy, to desire a child so much and then give him to someone else to raise. But you see, if I have learned anything through this, it is that the Lord is the Giver of all things. I’m only giving back what is already His.”

Forgotten by God?

We may not have felt the ache of childlessness, but we have watched as family or friends have suffered this loss. We have all felt the bitter pain of feeling forgotten and cast aside by society and friends for something we have done or are unable to accomplish.

1. When have you felt forgotten by friends or by God?

2. When have you wanted something so much that you felt like bargaining with God? What kind of promises did you make?
**Perseverance**

3. Read 1 Samuel 1:6–11. What do we learn about Hannah’s life and despair?

4. Read 1 Samuel 1:12–28, especially verses 15–16, 22, and 26–28. How does Hannah demonstrate the strength of her character?

5. How is the word “remember” used in this narrative of faith (verses 11, 19)? How does God “remember” you?

6. How does the Lord respond to Hannah’s faithfulness (verse 20)? What was Hannah’s response to the gift of a child (verses 22–28)?

7. What were the results of Hannah’s infertility and the subsequent birth of Samuel?

**“Lord, Make Me Your Servant”**

8. Hannah is portrayed in a variety of positions in this narrative. In all of them she describes herself as a servant (verses 11, 16, 18). In what kind of moments has it been hard for you to remember that you are a servant of the Lord? How are you reminded?
9. We remember Hannah for keeping her promise to give Samuel to God’s service. Hannah shows no hesitation in giving back what is already his. How have you been encouraged to remember and respond to the great gift of grace that God has given you?

Hannah’s prayer of thanksgiving (1 Samuel 2:1–10) has been compared to Mary’s song of praise (Luke 1:46–55). Responding to the gift or promise of a child, both Hannah and Mary praise God for the marvelous things He has done. Clearly, Hannah’s story foreshadows the birth of Christ and His service to the church.

10. How do you connect to the promise of the birth of Christ and the realization of that promise in your own life?

For This Week

- Memorize 1 Samuel 2:1.
- Pray that the Lord remembers your desires, and pray that you remember that you are a servant and a child of God.
- God has given you the greatest blessing of all, salvation through faith in Jesus. Share your blessing with family and friends.

Closing Worship

Pray responsively the conclusion of Hannah’s prayer (1 Samuel 2:6–10).

**Leader:** The Lord brings death and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up.

**Group:** The Lord sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts.
Leader: He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.

Group: For the foundations of the earth are the Lord’s; upon them He has set the world.

Leader: He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.

Group: It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the Lord will be shattered.

Leader: He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth.

Group: He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed.

All: Amen.
Leader Guide

Leaders, please note the different abilities of your class members. Some will easily find the Bible passages listed in this study. Others will need assistance. To make participation easier, team up members of the class. For example, if a question asks you to look up several passages, assign one passage to one group, the second to another, and so forth. Divide up the work! Let participants present the different answers they discover.

Introduce each biblical character with the following tools:

- **Chart** helps students locate the Bible character in world history and in relation to major biblical figures.
- **Setting** provides students with a cultural setting of what life was like for the people of that day (this section is not intended to directly describe the biblical character).
- **Meet a Hero** summarizes the portion of the Bible that will be studied so that people who are new to Bible study can “catch up” with mature Bible students as they discuss the Bible character together. To spice up the lesson, invite a dynamic member of your class to deliver this character monologue in a dramatic fashion.

Each topic then divides into three easy-to-use sections:

- **Focus** introduces key concepts that will be discovered.
- **Inform** guides the participants into Scripture to uncover truth about how God made the Bible character into a hero and redeems all people through Christ.
- **Connect** enables participants to apply that which is learned in Scripture to their lives and provides them an opportunity to formulate and articulate a defense of a key doctrine.

Conclude each session by discussing **For This Week**, which provides participants with practical suggestions for extending the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world, and by using the **Worship** suggestions.
Hannah
(1 Samuel 1:1–28)

Objectives
By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s word, we will
• describe how God challenged Hannah to wait patiently on God’s will;
• explain how God remembered Hannah out of His great love for His children;
• receive strength by the realization of God’s promise to send His anointed one.

Opening Worship
Speak the first part of Hannah’s prayer of praise and thanksgiving (1 Samuel 2:1–6) responsively by verses.

Cultural Setting and Meet a Hero
Have participants read these two sections silently or ask volunteers to read them aloud. Consider having a class member act out “Meet a Hero” as a dramatic monologue.

Forgotten by God? (Focus)
Waiting is not something most of us do well. We live in a world of fast cars, fast modems, and fast food. “Time is money,” and wasting time is therefore wasting money. How do we react when we’re forced to wait? We become impatient, grumble, and lose faith. When we have to wait for an answer to prayer, we quickly come to the conclusion that God is not there, or that He doesn’t care.

The Scriptures say that “at just the right time,” Jesus Christ came to earth to be our Savior. His death and resurrection bring immediate grace into our lives, and renew us as God’s children. By faith strengthened through Word and Sacrament, we can learn how to wait upon the Lord (as Hannah did) and trust that He will always be with us.

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary. Even when we try to bargain with God, He God blesses us purely out of grace for Jesus’ sake, and not because anything we have to offer Him.

**Perseverance (Inform)**

3. Hannah is barren. She is so devastated by her state that she goes into deep mourning.
4. She pours out her soul to the Lord. She promises to consecrate her son into the Lord’s service. When the Lord answered her prayers, Hannah was faithful in fulfilling her promise.
5. God does more than recall that Hannah exists. He goes into action on her behalf. We can have confidence that He does the same for us, even when we feel alone and abandoned by God.
6. Hannah becomes pregnant. She offers the gift of her son back to the Lord.
7. The Lord worked faith in Hannah. Through this gift, Samuel would be used as a great prophet and servant of the Lord.

**“Lord, Make Me Your Servant” (Connect)**

8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary. This account is one of many in Scripture that reminds us that all that we have is a gracious gift from God’s hand. One of the great forms of praise we can give Him is to return thanks to the Lord and use those gifts for His glory.
10. Through the miracle of the Christ-child, we too have been made children of God. Our new lives in Christ are consecrated for service in His kingdom.

**For This Week**

Encourage the participants to carry out one or more of the suggested opportunities.

**Closing Worship**

Pray responsively the conclusion of Hannah’s prayer (1 Samuel 2:6–10), found on page ____.