

SAMUEL

God's heroes can trust Him at any age

There are many times when God's people do not listen to him and obey him like they should, but even in the worst of times there are those who still believe God in spite of what those around them may be doing. Hannah was a woman who lived during one of those low times for God's people and Hannah was one of those people who continued to believe in God and listen to him even though many people around her were not interested at all in what God had to say.

However, Hannah had a problem that made her very, very sad. Hannah was married to a man who loved her very much, but she was not able to have a baby. While others around her were having babies and were so happy to have a family, her arms were empty. She knew God could allow her to have a baby if he wanted to, so she prayed often that God would please let her have a baby who she could love. Her husband tried to comfort her, but nothing would ease her sorrow.

One day she was in the temple (this is the place where people came to worship God and give him offerings) praying for a baby. As she prayed, the tears rolled down her cheeks. She begged God for a baby like she had many times in the past.

But this time her prayer was different. As she prayed, she made a promise to God. She told God that if he would give her a baby boy, she would return him to the temple and give him back to God. He would not grow up at home with Hannah and her husband. Instead her son would serve God full-time by being a helper to the high priest (this is the man who ran the entire temple). For the rest of his life, Hannah promised, her son would serve God in the temple.

When the high priest passed by and saw Hannah crying, he did not understand what was happening. He wondered, "Who is this woman? And why is she carrying on like this?"

When Hannah explained the sorrow in her heart and what she had promised God, the high priest sent her home with the hope that God would answer her prayer.

Sure enough, that's what happened! Hannah had a son and named him Samuel. A couple years later she brought him to the temple in order to keep the promise she had made to God. She presented him to the high priest, named Eli, and left him there to serve God in the temple. It must have been hard to say good-bye to the son she loved so much after praying for him so many times. But Hannah gave him to God.

So there Samuel was, a very young boy growing up in the temple helping Eli, the high priest. Now Eli had two sons of his own, also. They were very evil and selfish and God was not pleased at all with the way they treated his people. We'll talk about them later in the story.

Every year Samuel's parents would make the trip from their home to the city where the temple was. They would visit their son, Samuel, and each year his mother would give him a new robe that she had made for him. It was hard for Samuel to say good-bye to his parents for another year, but he knew that he was serving God in the place where God had put him. Even though he was very young, Samuel was learning what it means to trust God and believe in his plan.

One night as Samuel was falling asleep, he heard a voice call his name. "Samuel. Samuel."

Thinking that it was Eli calling him, he got up, ran to his room, and asked, "What do you need?"

Eli rolled over, rubbed his eyes, and said, "Samuel, go back to bed. I never called for you."

Samuel went back to bed, but once again heard the voice just like before. He thought, "I'm not crazy! I know I heard a voice!"

So once again he went in to Eli and once again Eli told him to go back to bed. This happened three times and finally, on the third time, Eli realized that Samuel was not dreaming or imagining it or making it up. Could it be that this was God trying to speak to Samuel?

This time when Eli sent Samuel back to bed he told him, “If you hear the voice again, answer by saying, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’”

Eli was right. It had been God trying to speak to Samuel. When Samuel heard the voice this time, he answered just like Eli had told him.

God told Samuel something that night that was very difficult to hear. God told Samuel that he had a very important, but very difficult job for him. Eli’s sons, who were supposed to serve and help God’s people in the temple, had become so very, very evil that God was going to destroy them. This had become the only way to protect the Israelites from these two cruel sons. They were stealing from the people and they were hurting them in many awful ways. Samuel’s job was going to be to deliver this message to their father, Eli. God was telling Samuel to be his mouth.

Can you imagine how Samuel felt? He knew that in the morning Eli would ask him what God had said. Samuel did not want to give this dad such terrible news about his own sons, but, even though he was a youngster, Samuel had learned how to trust God and obey what he says.

Samuel was not an adult. He was just a boy. And God would have to give him lots of courage to do this, but you see, boys and girls can be heroes for God just like Samuel was and you don’t have to be an adult.

God’s heroes come in all shapes and sizes and they come in all ages, too! When someone believes what God says and trusts God’s plan for them, that person is a hero for God. No matter how old or young they are!