

Deep Truth. Bold Faith. Changed Lives.



# David C Cook

## Adult Teacher's Guide

**SAMPLE LESSON**

Includes links to related resources



**BIL**  
Bible-in-Life

Responding to God's Grace  
Studies in the Old and New Testaments

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# Insights into This Quarter: Opportunities Disguised as Problems



As you study Lessons 4—5 in this quarter, refer to these comments from noted Bible commentator Warren Wiersbe.

Someone has defined a committee as “a group of people who individually can do nothing and collectively decide nothing can be done.” Because they lacked faith, all the spies Moses sent to the Promised Land except Caleb and Joshua were discouraged at the prospect of entering the land and fighting the enemy, and their discouragement quickly spread throughout the camp. Doubt had turned to unbelief, and unbelief is rebellion against God (Num. 14:9; Heb. 3:16-19).

It’s interesting how the 10 spies identified Canaan as “the land to which you sent us” (Num. 13:27) and “the Land, through which we have gone” ( vs. 32), but not as “the land the Lord our God is giving us.” Because the 10

men were walking by sight, they didn’t really believe God’s promises. They looked at the people of the land and saw giants; they looked at the Canaanite cities and saw high walls and locked gates; and they looked at themselves and saw grasshoppers. If only they had looked by faith to God, they would have seen the One who was able to conquer every enemy and who see the nations of the world as grasshoppers (Isa. 40:22). “We are not able” is the cry of unbelief (Num. 13:31), but “our God whom we serve is able” is the affirmation of faith (Dan. 3:17; see Phil. 4:13).

What John Gardner said about the political arena can be applied to the spiritual arena and the Christian’s walk of faith: “We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.” A faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted, and God tests our faith to help us make sure it’s genuine (1 Pet. 1:1-9) and to help make it grow. “Faith comes first to the hearing ear,” said A.W. Tozer,

“not to the cogitating mind.” “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, NKJV).

To the unbelieving world, it’s unreasonable for anybody to trust a God they’ve never seen or heard, but we have all the evidence we need to convince us that God is dependable and has the power to accomplish what He says He will do. What He promises, He is able to perform (Rom. 4:21). Israel had seen what the Lord did to the Egyptians and the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-16), and they had every assurance He would never fail His people.

Unbelief is serious because it challenges the character of God and rebels against the will of God. “But without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6)

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## Quarterly Preview

This quarter focuses on faith in God and shows how His grace impacts the lives of all believers, as demonstrated by their obedience, gratitude, and holy living.

Unit 1 studies God’s faithfulness to Abraham by saving Lot, His answer to Hannah’s prayer, and His provision to the Israelites in the Exodus despite their rebellion.

Unit 2 explores the many benefits we have because of God’s grace through the stories of Elijah and the widow, Jesus healing the centurion’s servant, and His blessing of the sinful woman.

Unit 3 examines Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians and Thessalonians on how to live as faithful followers of Christ. First and 2 Peter teach that faith requires holy living and goodness.

The information above and much more about our lessons is in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*. You can purchase the commentary as a [two-volume set \(Item #105399\)](#) or you can purchase the [Old Testament volume \(Item #105398\)](#) or the [New Testament volume \(Item #105397\)](#) separately. Find these at your local Christian bookstore or order them online at [www.DavidCCook.org](http://www.DavidCCook.org)



# Adult Teacher's Guide

## It's fall!

Apples, pumpkins, and a time for renewing friendships or making new ones. This fall, have a class or two outside to remind your class to stop and appreciate the majesty and glory of God in the changing leaves and the crisp fall air.



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### Adult Teacher's Guide

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Number 1

To aid and advance Christian education . . . David C Cook's mission is to equip the Church with Christ-centered resources for making and teaching disciples who obediently transform today's generations.

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## You Are Sharing Jesus Around the World

Because you bought this curriculum, you are helping send Bible study and outreach materials to over 142 countries! Your purchases helped more than 22 million children receive materials last year about Jesus they otherwise would never have had!

## Insights into This Quarter

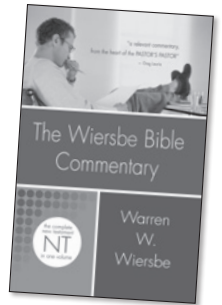
Helpful Bible background material for your teaching comes from renowned Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe, author of the million-selling *Be* series and the *Wiersbe Bible Commentary*.

## Teaching Tools

With the Four-Step Lesson Plan, your job becomes a whole lot easier, and adults will discover how they grow spiritually through it. The featured resources equip you to enhance your teaching and to bring the Bible into your lives.

## Resources for Deeper Bible Study

As you prepare your lessons, the [\*Wiersbe Bible Commentary\*](#) has everything you need to make your lesson preparation time easier and more profitable. [Real Life Downloaded](#) brings you FREE lesson extras every week, and [\*The Bible Knowledge Commentary\*](#) covers all Scripture to help you establish the context of your lesson.



## RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

Lessons Based on the International Sunday School Lessons Outlines Studies in the Old and New Testaments

### Unit 1—God Is Faithful

#### Value Emphasized: Dependability

<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>Faithful During Distress</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>9/1</b>	<i>Genesis 19:1-9, 15, 23-26, 29</i>	
<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Faith During Grief</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>9/8</b>	<i>1 Samuel 1:9-20</i>	
<b>Lesson 3</b>	<b>Faith During Uncertainty</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>9/15</b>	<i>Exodus 16:1-15</i>	
<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>Faithful Despite Unfaithfulness</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>9/22</b>	<i>Numbers 13:1-2, 17-18, 25-28; 14:1-2, 5-10a</i>	
<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Faithful in Consequences</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>9/29</b>	<i>Numbers 14:10b-20</i>	

## Unit 2—Responses to God’s Faithfulness

Value Emphasized: Obedience

<b>Lesson 6 Obedient Faith</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>10/6</b> <i>Deuteronomy 4:1-8, 12-13</i>	
<b>Lesson 7 Active Faith</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>10/13</b> <i>1 Kings 17:8-16</i>	
<b>Lesson 8 Humble Faith</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>10/20</b> <i>Luke 7:1-10</i>	
<b>Lesson 9 Grateful Faith</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>10/27</b> <i>Luke 7:37-48</i>	

### Link to Last Week!

This accountability chain stretches from week to week, a great reminder to you and your adult students that Sunday school is making a difference.

## Unit 3—Faith Leads to Holy Living

Value Emphasized: Faithfulness

<b>Lesson 10 Faith That Is Tested</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>11/3</b> <i>2 Corinthians 13:1-11</i>	
<b>Lesson 11 Faith That Sets an Example *</b> .....	<b>90</b>
<b>11/10</b> <i>1 Thessalonians 1:2-10</i>	
<b>Lesson 12 Faith That Is Focused</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>11/17</b> <i>1 Peter 1:13-25</i>	
<b>Lesson 13 Faith That Escapes Corruption</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>11/24</b> <i>2 Peter 1:1-15</i>	
<b>Leading People to Christ</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<b>Be prepared, not panicked, when an adult confronts his or her need for Jesus.</b>	

\* This lesson is designed to help you share Christ with students who are not yet believers.



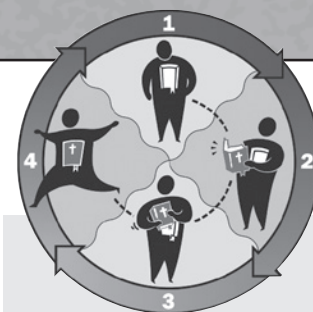
### Real-Life Downloaded: IT'S FREE!

Get plugged in to faith and culture with an exciting ministry resource ripped from today's headlines. *Real Life Downloaded* combines current news stories with relevant Bible lessons, all in a format that'll have your small groups talking. Take a test drive today, download your free copy, and let us know what you think. Now available for your class at:

[www.RealLifeDownloaded.com](http://www.RealLifeDownloaded.com)

# Bring the Bible to Life for Adults

## As Easy as 1, 2, 3, 4!



### Natural Learning Cycle

You've just been around the Natural Learning Cycle. It's fun! It's simple! It's how we all learn—adults, teens, and children. First, we get interested in the subject (Step 1). Then we learn the facts from the Bible (Step 2). Next, we practice what we've learned (Step 3). Then, and most importantly, we use what we have learned during the week (Step 4). Then we come back to class next week and share how we have experienced God at work in our lives (Link to Last Week).

### Step 1: Life Connection



Surprise! Most adults show up on Sunday focused more on where the mortgage money will come from and how they can recapture their relationship with their teen than on learning something new from the Bible. This step will help adults focus on the morning's challenge. Don't skip this step! It's not fluff or foolishness. It's the step that gets adults ready to discover why this Bible study is important to them. At the end of these few minutes, they are ready to participate—and today's lesson just might contain the answers to life questions they brought with them to class.

### Step 2: Bible Exploration



Lively Bible study! That's what happens here. As adults study the Bible and discuss what they found, they gain growing understanding of how to move forward on their discipleship journey.

Spend quality time preparing Step 2. In class, you can discuss the passage, read the Scriptures, and conduct both deductive and inductive Bible study. Bring it alive with your expression, actions, and most of all, your own attitude! Each week you'll challenge adults to prepare for next week's lesson. Their preparation isn't long or difficult, but it does encourage participation. When adults have invested something of themselves in the lesson, they will get more out of it.

### Step 3: Bible Interaction



Practice time—a time to turn the classroom into a laboratory. You'll discover how deeply your adults are personally involved with what the Bible teaches. This guide will give you three choices every week. Use all three. Or, if you have a small class, pick one. Activities will be different each week: a role-play, creative activity, discussion, case study, interviews—lots of adult-level interaction.

### Step 4: Life Response



Okay! You got your adults focused on the topic (Step 1). Then you guided them into the Bible (Step 2). They practiced what they learned (Step 3). Now students will decide what they will actually do with what they've learned. This part of the lesson is not safe! Living the Christian life may be challenging but it is always exciting.

Each of your adults will decide how to respond to God because of the lesson each week. You can encourage people, but ultimately they need to personally own their decisions. They will respond because they choose to, not because of outside pressure you put on them.

Don't have a single doubt about it! The biggest part of your Sunday school lesson doesn't happen in your classroom. It happens on Monday and Tuesday—and through the week—when instead of following their own desires or the crowd, they dare to say, "No, I will follow Jesus."

# Your Teaching Resources



## The Bible Study Basics

These quarterly resources enable you to coordinate a complete learning experience for your students.

**Adult Teacher's Guide:** step-by-step instructions to help you prepare for and teach each lesson, with an introductory story on the weekly Bible theme, Bible background material, and activities applying the Bible theme to your students' lives.

**Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:** this packet contains an *Adult Teacher's Guide* and teaching aids for the lessons, including full-color Bible background posters, worksheets, and other discussion starters to be used with *Adult Teacher's Guide*.

**Comprehensive Bible Study:** an adult-level student booklet providing students with commentary on the Scriptures and application to their daily lives. **Regular or Large Print Edition.**

**Lesson Leaflet:** [tear-out summaries](#) of each lesson in *Comprehensive Bible Study* to be given to visitors, as well as a special page of outreach suggestions. Churches can write their names and addresses on the back cover and give *Lesson Leaflet* to shut-ins, prisoners, or people sitting in laundromats or doctors' offices, or use *Lesson Leaflet* to start off-site Bible studies.

**Power for Living:** an adult, [magazine-style paper](#) profiling Christians serving the Lord all over the world, along with daily Bible readings, puzzles, poems, book excerpts, and updates on spiritual trends. Can also be used as an outreach tool for prisons, doctor's offices, with shut-ins, etc.

**The Quiet Hour:** [daily devotionals](#) coordinated with the Daily Bible Readings listed in *Comprehensive Bible Study*. For each day, you'll read through the recommended passage of Scripture, consider how a fellow believer has applied the passage's theme to daily life, and be encouraged to step into the day living with God in your life.

### More materials on p. 8.

#### Basic Classroom Supplies

You may need the following supplies for this quarter's lessons:

- Bibles—several versions
- Paper/pencils/colored markers
- Thumbtacks
- Scissors
- Chalk or white board, overhead, or newsprint
- CD player
- Cellophane tape
- Masking tape
- Index cards
- Pointer
- Stapler
- Hymnals or chorus book

# Resources for Deeper Bible Study

When you want to know more about the Scriptures

Beyond your **Adult Teacher's Guide** are a wealth of resources to give you the in-depth Bible study you want and need to help you and your students understand Scripture as fully as you can.

• For even more depth, [\*\*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New and Old Testaments\*\*](#), by Dallas Theological Seminary professors John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, answers such questions as:

- What does that verse mean?
- What is the significance of this word or phrase in Hebrew?
- How can this alleged contradiction be explained?

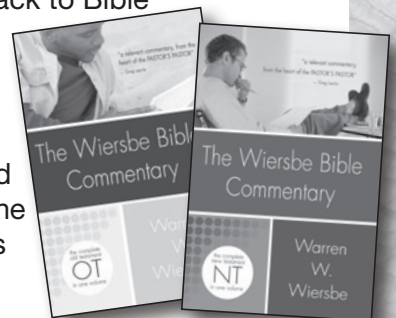
The commentaries include for each Bible book an introduction (discussion of the author, historical background, purpose, features), outline, commentary, and bibliography, as well as easy-to-understand interpretations of the Scripture verses.



• Each week [\*\*Real Life Downloaded\*\*](#), our **FREE** resource, combines current news stories with your weekly Bible lessons. Online you will find a new introductory activity, a news story for Step 1, discussion questions, and a new Step 4 activity. Also online are links to more Bible commentary, to music videos that relate to the focus of the lesson, and to videos of Bible places you will be studying in your lesson. *Real Life Downloaded* is available nine days before you teach, so you will be able to plan your lessons ahead and set up any audio-visual equipment you

need. **Check it out today at** <http://www.RealLifeDownloaded.com>

• For every lesson, you will also find more commentary in the two-volume [\*\*Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments\*\*](#). You can study the Bible verse by verse with one of America's most beloved pastors, Dr. Warren Wiersbe, the former pastor of The Moody Church in Chicago and for 10 years the general director and Bible teacher for the Back to Bible radio broadcast. Whether you are a pastor, teacher, or layperson, these commentaries allow you to study the Bible in easy-to-follow sections that emphasize personal application as well as biblical meaning. Developed from Dr. Wiersbe's best-selling "Be" series of Bible study books, these commentaries unpack all of God's Word in accessible, easy-to-read language. Each volume offers you Dr. Wiersbe's trustworthy insights on the Scriptures, introductions and outlines for each Bible book, and text that is free of academic jargon.



The Word of God admonishes us to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). These are the resources to help you do just that.



**This selection from *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* can be used for background on Lesson 9 for October 27.**

### **The Repentant Woman (Luke 7:36-38)**

It was customary in that day for outsiders to hover around during banquets so they could watch the “important people” and hear the conversation. Since everything was open, they could even enter the banquet hall and speak to a guest. This explains how this woman had access to Jesus. He was not behind locked doors. In that day women were not invited to banquets.

Jewish rabbis did not speak to women in public, nor did they eat with them in public. A woman of this type would not be welcomed in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Her sins were not named, but we get the impression she was a woman of the streets with a bad reputation.

The woman admitted she was a sinner and gave evidence that she was a repentant sinner. If you check a harmony of the Gospels, you will discover that just before this event, Jesus had given the gracious invitation, “Come unto me...and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Perhaps that was when the woman turned from her sin and trusted the Savior. Her tears, her humble attitude, and her expensive gift all spoke of a changed heart.

**The Critical Host (vss. 39-43)**— Simon was embarrassed, both for himself and for his guests. People had been saying that Jesus was a great prophet (Luke 7:16), but He certainly was not exhibiting much prophetic discernment if He allowed a sinful woman to anoint His feet! He must be a fraud.

Simon’s real problem was blindness: he could not see himself, the woman, or the Lord Jesus. It was easy for him to say, “She is a sinner!” but impossible for him to say, “I am a sinner!” (see also Luke 18:9-14). Jesus proved that He was indeed a prophet by reading Simon’s thoughts and revealing his needs.

The parable does not deal with the amount of sin in a person’s life but the awareness of that sin in his heart. How much sin must a person commit to be a sinner? Simon and the woman were both sinners. Simon was guilty of the sins of the spirit, while the woman was guilty of the sins of the flesh (see 2 Cor. 7:1). Her sins were known, while Simon’s were hidden to everyone except God. And both of them were bankrupt and could not pay their debt to God. Simon was just as spiritually bankrupt as the woman, only he did not realize it.

Forgiveness is the gift of God’s grace; the debt was paid in full by Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The word *frankly* means “graciously and freely.” The woman accepted God’s free offer of salvation and expressed her love openly. Simon rejected that offer and remained unforgiven. He was not only blind to himself, but he was blind to the woman and to his honored guest!

**The Forgiving Savior (vss. 44-50)**— This woman was guilty of sins of commission; Simon was guilty of sins of omission. He had not been a gracious host to the Lord Jesus. Everything that Simon neglected to do, the woman did—and she did it better!

There are two errors we must avoid as we interpret the Lord’s words. First, we must not conclude that this woman was saved by her tears and her gift. Jesus made it clear that it was her faith alone that saved her (vs. 50), for no amount of good works can pay for salvation (Titus 3:4-7).

Nor should we think that lost sinners are saved by love, either God’s love for them or their love for God. God loves the whole world (John 3:16), yet the whole world is not saved. “For by grace you have been saved through faith...not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9, NKJV). Grace is love that pays a price, and that price was the death of the Son of God on the Cross.

Jesus did not reject either the woman’s tears or her gift of ointment because her works were the evidence of her faith. “Faith without works is dead!” (Jas. 2:14-26). We are not saved by faith plus works; we are saved by faith that leads to works. This anonymous woman illustrates the truth of Galatians 5:6: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (NIV).

How did the woman know her sins were forgiven? Jesus told her. How do we know today that we have been forgiven? God tells us in His Word. Once you understand the meaning of God’s grace, you have no trouble receiving His free and full forgiveness and rejoicing in it.

Of course, the legalistic critics at the dinner were shocked when Jesus said, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.” By saying this, Jesus was claiming to be God (see Luke 5:21)! But He is God, and He died for the sins that she committed. His words of forgiveness were not cheap words; they cost Him dearly on the Cross.

How was this woman saved? She repented of her sins and put her faith in Jesus Christ. How did she know she was truly forgiven? She has the assurance of His word. What was the proof of her salvation? Her love for Christ expressed in sacrificial devotion to Him. For the first time in her life, she had peace with God (Luke 7:50). Literally, the Scripture reads, “Go *into* peace,” for she had moved out of her enmity toward God and was now enjoying peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 8:7-8).

When Jesus healed the centurion’s servant, it was a great miracle. An even greater miracle was His raising the widow of Nain’s son from the dead. But in Luke 7, the greatest miracle of all was His saving this woman from her sins and making her a new person. The miracle of salvation has to be the greatest miracle of all, for it meets the greatest need, brings the greatest results (and they last forever), and cost the greatest price.

## Lesson Overview

### 1 Life Need

Discuss how God shares in our pain and grief.

### 2 Bible Learning

Read how God answered the prayers of a grieving, childless woman.

#### **Suggested Material:**

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible sheet—[Forever Faithful](#)

### 3 Bible Application

Explore how God understands our pain and grief.

### 4 Life Response

Remember God is involved in our pain and grief.



# Faith During Grief

**Hannah's Grief**—Hannah, the mother of the prophet and last judge in Israel, teaches us a valuable lesson about God's response to a troubled heart. Hannah desperately wanted a child, but the Lord had closed her womb. Since the culture allowed a husband to take another spouse if the first wife produced no offspring, Hannah's husband Elkanah married Peninnah, and God blessed their union with several sons and daughters. Elkanah still loved and favored Hannah, so Peninnah envied Hannah and constantly sought to irritate Hannah with insults, which heightened Hannah's bitterness.

**Hannah's Prayer and Eli's Response**—One year while the family was celebrating a feast at God's tabernacle in Shiloh, Hannah hurt so badly she left the celebration table and walked to the tabernacle. She needed comfort in her distress, the kind only God supplies. Hannah's lips moved as she prayed, but she uttered no sound. She addressed herself to the Lord as His handmaiden. Hannah begged God for a son, promising to give him back to the Lord.

In God's providential plan, Eli the priest was there at the same time Hannah prayed. He accused her of being drunk, and she quickly defended herself. Her heart was broken, she explained, and she was pouring it all out before the Lord. On God's behalf, Eli told her to go and be happy and at peace. Her petition would be answered.

**God Answered**—Hannah returned to her family a new woman. She'd left her anguish at the tabernacle and now moved forward in confidence, trusting God, and filled with joy. God honored His word. She and Elkanah conceived, and nine months later she held Samuel in her arms.

**God's Ministry in Times of Suffering**—Like Hannah, at various times God's children feel He is not answering our prayers. All alone and suffering, we begin to think the Father has forgotten all about us. This is never true. God may choose to be silent or delay answering a prayer, but this is always according to His wisdom. Rest assured He's aware of each person's grief, heartbreak, and pain. He will answer at the right time and in the right way.

## AS YOUR STUDENTS ARRIVE

Ask your students to think of someone they know who regularly shows compassion, empathy, or sensitivity to others. How important is having someone like that in our lives?

**Link to Last Week:** Spend a few minutes talking about how some of your students showed God's graciousness and faithfulness to a person in need.

Lesson 2 • September 8 • Page 12

## Faith During Grief

She was down front every Sunday with the pastor at the end of the service, and people were beginning to ask what it was that was going on with Jessica.

This Sunday, as on other Sundays, Jessica kept her eyes closed, blocking out everything and everyone. She prayed within herself the same prayer she had prayed for years. She did not know the whereabouts of her 24-year-old daughter. Her daughter had left town three years ago to be with her "soulmate" that she had met online. Jessica had called the police, but they said since she was of age, there was nothing they could do.

Jessica's daughter called her from a blocked number every couple of months, but the bereaved mother wanted to see her daughter and her newly-born granddaughter.

Jessica felt Pastor Graham's hand on her shoulder, "Oh Lord, You know the petition of Your daughter's heart. You know the grief she has been suffering. Only You are able to help her. So I ask You, Lord Jesus, to answer her cry and to heal her heart."

A month later, Bailee and Dashawna were laughing outside of the sanctuary in the vestibule after church.

"Who is that woman and baby with Jessica?" asked Bailee.

"Sister Graham said it is Jessica's daughter and granddaughter," Dashawna said.

The two women grew quiet as Jessica walked up to them. "Bailee and Dashawna, I'd like for you to meet an answer to prayer: my daughter and granddaughter," Jessica beamed.

**1. What kinds of grief and pain have you experienced over the years?**

**2. How has Scripture comforted you in your times of grief?**

**3. Have you ever been angry with God in your moments of grief? Explain your answer if you're willing to share.**

**LESSON FOCUS:** God hears and cares about our grief and pain.

## 1 Life Need

*Discuss how God shares in our pain and grief*

Everyone has experienced grief and pain on some level. Grief could be described as being in deep sorrow, misery, anguish, agony, or torment. We may talk about pain in terms of torture, suffering, or affliction. We certainly don't look for it, but pain and grief are bound to occur sometime in our lives.

Ask your students to form small groups to read the anecdote and then discuss their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, students may say that they grieved for the loss of a loved one or the loss of opportunities they had that they did not take. Often, we grieve and are in pain for loved ones who are living a life that does not please God, or we may grieve over our physical health when it is not what we would like it to be.

Question 2 may bring up such Scripture as Psalm 22 or John 14. We turn to Scripture to find meaning in what has happened to us or to find comforting words that ease the pain.

However, as Question 3 reminds us, we may also lash out at God and not find any comfort in Scripture. For example, we may have prayed for a loved one not to die, but that person died, and we don't understand why God allowed that to happen. We may wonder if God even hears our prayers, but this week's Scripture assures us that He does hear us and cares for us.

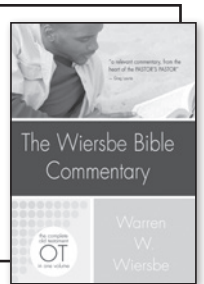
# Bible Learning 2

Read how God answered the prayers of a grieving, childless woman

On the poster sheet, read the third paragraph, and on the poster, point out the painting of Eli dedicating Samuel as Hannah looks on.



For more commentary on these Scriptures, read pp. 494-496 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.



## HANNAH'S VOW

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-14 and discuss these ideas:

- Hannah could not have children, and after the family finished eating and drinking, she prayed in great anguish to God in the tabernacle at Shiloh.
- As Hannah wept intensely, the priest Eli was sitting by the doorpost of the tabernacle.
- In her prayer, Hannah asked

### BIBLE EXTRA

#### Hannah and Her Husband

The Book of 1 Samuel transitions us from the period of the judges to the time of the kings—and Samuel is the bridge as both the final judge and the one who anoints the first two kings. At the time of this passage, Eli served as high priest, also fulfilling the role of judge (after Samson's death). Today's passage occurs about 10 years into Eli's 40-year tenure as high priest/judge.

Hannah was one of two wives of Elkanah, a Levite from the land of Ephraim. She had the love of her husband, but no children, whereas Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, had children—a fact she taunted Hannah with regularly. As was their yearly custom, Elkanah and his family traveled to Shiloh, the current location of the main tabernacle. The frustration may have intensified during the harvest festival, which would have reminded Hannah of her infertility.

First Samuel 1:4-8 provides a vivid illustration of Elkanah's love for Hannah, Peninnah's intense jealousy and relentless provocation, and Hannah's misery—and thus, the backdrop for Hannah's prayer in this passage.

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## Hannah's Vow

*1 Samuel 1:9-14, KJV*

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

*1 Samuel 1:9-14, NIV*

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. <sup>11</sup>And she made a vow, saying, "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."

<sup>12</sup>As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk <sup>14</sup>and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

After everyone ate, Hannah departed from the feast in Shiloh; the impression here is that in her sorrow she ate little, if at all (see also vss. 7, 18). We can surmise that Hannah began her prayer somewhere near the entrance of the tabernacle, as verse 9 informs us that Eli, the high priest, "was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house."

"In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping

God for a son, and she made a vow that if He would give her a son, she would give her son to God and not cut his hair.

•As she continued to pray silently, Eli watched her and thought she was drunk because her lips were moving and no words came out.

• Misinterpreting what he saw, he told her to stop drinking.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

After everyone ate, Hannah leaves the feast to pray; she must have been somewhere near the

entrance of the tabernacle, since Eli “was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord’s house” (vs. 9) watching her pray. The impression here (and from verse 18) is that Hannah had been too upset to eat much, if anything. We also know from verse 10 that she was in “deep anguish . . . weeping bitterly.” Her pain is palpable.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

Hannah prays simply and desperately: If the Lord will give her a son, she will dedicate the boy back to Him. The details of her promise echo the vow of the Nazirite—a vow that went beyond the dedication her son would have already been under as a Levite. It is also interesting to note that this Old Testament prayer is directly to the Lord, rather than to the priest, which would have been the normal “process” at that time.

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bitterly” (vs. 10). As with many effective prayers, Hannah’s prayer is direct and desperate: “if you . . . give [me] 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.” The specific promise Hannah made to God was known as the vow of the Nazirite—interestingly, the same vow the previous judge, Samson, had taken from birth (Num. 6:1-21). As a Levite, a son would have already been dedicated to the Lord; Hannah is, in essence, “upping the ante” here.

It is also interesting to note that at a time when prayers were normally brought first to the Levitical priest, Hannah was praying directly to God—and “kept on praying” (vs. 12). She is pouring out her heart to the Lord. If He could shut up her womb, He could open it—and Hannah is willing to dedicate her child back to Him if He should honor her prayer.

Again, Eli is watching all of this—although he cannot hear it: “Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard” (vs. 13). Because of this—and probably also because of Hannah’s deeply emotional state—Eli comes to the wrong conclusion, and reprimands Hannah: “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine” (vs. 14). Especially in light of the festival Hannah had just come from, Eli had made an honest mistake, but a very wrong one. Hannah will correct him shortly—and in response, Eli would bless her prayer.

**4. What does Hannah do after the feast? How would you describe her emotional state?**

**5. What stands out about Hannah’s prayer?**

**6. How does Eli first react upon observing Hannah’s prayer?**

## God Blesses Hannah

*1 Samuel 1:15-20, KJV*

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but

*1 Samuel 1:15-20, NIV*

<sup>15</sup>“Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I

## BIBLE EXTRA

### The Feast in Shiloh

Israel celebrated three “pilgrimage feasts” each year—The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles. It is not clear which feast Elkanah and his family attended in 1 Samuel 1, although the text offers one possible clue: First Samuel 1:3 uses the phrase “year to year” (*yohm yohm*), which is also used in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod. 13:10).

During the time of the judges, pilgrimage feasts could be celebrated at a number of locations; as Elkanah lived in Ramah (vs. 19; about five miles north of modern-day Jerusalem), he could have worshiped at Bethel or Mizpah, only a few hours’ walk from Ramah. However, he chose to make the full-day trip to Shiloh, the main tabernacle, where the ark of the covenant was housed. Elkanah’s faithfulness during a time when “everyone did as they saw fit” (Judg. 21:25) is to be admired.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

Eli is watching Hannah, but cannot hear her, because she “was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard” (vs. 13). Because of this—and probably also because of Hannah’s deeply emotional state—Eli assumes she is drunk and reprimands her. Especially in light of the festival Hannah had just come from, it is an honest mistake, but Hannah will correct it.

## GOD BLESSES HANNAH

Finally, read 1 Samuel 1:15-20 and discuss these key ideas in the text:

- Hannah explained to Eli that she was not drunk, but was instead a woman praying while in deep pain.
- She was pouring out her heart to God from a place of anger, anguish, and grief.
- Eli said to Hannah that he prayed God would give her what she was asking for.

- Later, Hannah did receive what she prayed for from the Lord. She bore a son, she called his name Samuel, and she dedicated him to the Lord.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Hannah gently corrects Eli: She is not drunk as he assumes, but “a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul

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*KJV*

have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

*NIV*

was pouring out my soul to the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

<sup>17</sup>Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”

<sup>18</sup>She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

<sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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.”

## BIBLE EXTRA

### The Nazirite Vow

As we see in Hannah’s prayer, the purpose of the vow of the Nazirite was to be set apart to God. Typically, this vow was taken for a set and rather short period of time; it appears that the apostle Paul took this short-time vow, or a similar one (Acts 18:18). However, we also see examples in the Bible where this vow was lifelong—again, however poorly observed, by Samson (Judg. 13:3-5); and possibly by John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-15). This vow, in fact, is still observed by some Jewish sects today.

Again, as a Levite, Hannah’s son Samuel would already have been under a vow. But as a Levite, Samuel’s time of special dedication to the Lord would have only lasted from ages 30 to 50 (Num. 4:2-3). Thus, Hannah’s taking a more stringent, temporary vow and making it lifelong would have constituted a significantly greater consecration than that of a Levite.

In verse 15, Hannah gently corrects Eli’s incorrect assumptions. She is not drunk, but “a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.” She reiterates this in the next verse: She is not wicked (or “a daughter of Belial,” as the King James puts it—implying a prostitute, idolater, or devil-worshiper); rather, she is “praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

Eli is satisfied with Hannah’s gentle and respectful response—and likely more than a little contrite for assuming the worst of this godly, grief-stricken woman. Thus, as high priest he now offers his blessing to Hannah: “Go in peace, and

to the Lord” (vs. 15). She reiterates this in the next verse: She is not the wicked person (or “daughter of Belial”) he assumes her to be; rather, she is “praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” She is throwing herself completely on God’s mercy and kindness.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Eli is satisfied with Hannah’s response—and likely sorry for his initial response. Therefore, he blesses Hannah: “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you

what you have asked of him” (vs. 17). Hannah returns to the feast and now eats; “her face was no longer downcast” (vs. 18). Her anguish has been replaced by thankfulness and confidence that God will answer her prayer.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

After returning home to Ramah, “Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her” (vs. 19). God gave Hannah the son she had asked Him for; she names him Samuel, “Because I asked the LORD for him.” (vs. 20). Hannah would fulfill the other half of her prayer and give Samuel “to the LORD for all the days of his life (vs. 11; see also vss. 21-28).

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may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him” (vs. 17). She receives the blessing, and returns to the feast; this time, she “ate something, and her face was no longer downcast” (vs. 18). Hannah shows no signs of doubt that her prayer will be answered; she seems fully confident that the God of Israel will act. Her demeanor has been completely transformed.

This spirit of worship, thankfulness, and expectancy no doubt continued into the next day, when “Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD,” before making the full day’s trek back to Ramah. Not long after, maybe even that evening, “Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her” (vs. 19). The Lord had graciously answered Hannah’s desperate prayer almost immediately. Thus, “in the course of time” it became clear that Hannah was pregnant; God had given her the son for which she had asked the Lord.

Hannah named her son Samuel, meaning “asked before God” or “before the ark of God.” Hannah would fulfill her promise and dedicate Samuel to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:22-28), bringing him to Eli when he was likely still a toddler; God would honor her faithfulness by giving her five more children after Samuel (2:20-21). In time, Samuel would grow up to become the final judge of Israel, and the anointer of its first two kings, Saul and David.



Some of the many ruins at the site of ancient Shiloh in Israel. Here was located the tabernacle during the time of Hannah, Eli, and Samuel.

**7. How does Hannah respond to Eli’s accusations?**

**8. What does Eli do, after hearing Hannah’s explanation? How is Hannah changed by this?**

**9. How does God answer Hannah’s prayer? What is the significance of the name Hannah gives her child?**

## WINDOW ON THE WORD

### Prayer

*Prayer is our communication with God. It is how we talk with God, fellowship with our Creator, and thank Him for our many blessings. In prayer, we show our appreciation for everything He has done for us but also pray for others and their needs. In our prayers, we petition God for our own specific needs and concerns.*

*Some prayers are out loud and bold. Others are quiet and personal or the silent prayers of the heart.*

*Someone has described prayer as “the Spirit, speaking truth to truth.” Someone else has said, “When life is rough, pray; when life is great, pray.”*

*Pray often. Pray when and wherever you desire. There is no set place or time, but we know that however and whenever we pray, God hears us.*

# Bible Application 3

Explore how God understands our pain and grief

Photocopy this page, cut out the boxes, and give instructions to each group. Have a Bible concordance (a printed or online copy) for the Compassion group. Make copies of the handout to give to the group using it.

## Handout: 'Two Women's Grief'

Read the instructions on the sheet and share your answers with your group and then with the class.



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## When Jesus Cried

Anyone who does not believe that God cares about us should read (or reread) the story of Jesus, Lazarus, and his sisters Mary and Martha—all of them Jesus' good friends. Though Jesus waited four days before arriving when He heard that Lazarus was sick, it was not because He did not care about His friends. He told the sisters that their brother would not die from this sickness, that God would be glorified through what happened to their brother. Though they likely did not understand what He was saying, He told them that Lazarus had "fallen asleep" and that He had come to "wake him up" (John 11:11).

When the crowd of family and friends followed Martha to come and greet Jesus, they were weeping, but "Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again'" (vs. 23).

Jesus knew what would happen—He would raise Lazarus from the dead—but that did not mean He did not care about the sisters' grief. When He came to the tomb where Lazarus was buried, Scripture says, "Jesus wept" (vs. 35). The bystanders saw His grief and said, "See how he loved him!" (vs. 36).

Jesus commanded the stone to be moved from the door of the tomb, ready to raise His friend, but still, He was overcome with grief—again He was "deeply moved" (vs. 38) by the sadness of the situation. Jesus was moved with compassion and love for His friend and for those who grieved for Lazarus.

God hears; God cares. The song by Rev. Milton Brunson says, "So you think that you can't make it through  
And you feel like all your hope is gone  
Just remember, God cares for you  
And He knows what's best for you  
He cares, He cares for you."

**10.** Why is it important to remember that Jesus wept when His good friend died?

**11.** Do you believe that God truly feels your pain and grief when you're hurting? Explain your answer.

**12.** How can our times of grief and pain help us to understand more about God?

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Group

Read "When Jesus Cried" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12.** When Jesus wept for the death of His good friend Lazarus, it showed us just how much God cares about what happens to us. We may not always feel as if God cares for what we are going through, but that is simply not the case. We may not see it at the time, but "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

### God Has Compassion

Using the Bible concordance, find the number of places in the New Testament where Scripture says Jesus had "compassion" on or was compassionate toward people (for instance, Matt. 9:36). Then note the number of verses in the Old Testament where Scripture says God is "compassionate" (for example, Exod. 22:27; Ps. 103:8; Isa. 49:13). What do these verses tell you about how well God understands our pain and grief?

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# 4 Life Response

Remember God is involved in our pain and grief  
.....

Many people believe that God is this faraway entity who cannot be touched by our tiny, insignificant lives, that He has greater things to be concerned about than our little dramas and concerns. But this is not true. God is concerned about what concerns us, and He is

involved in answering our prayers in His own way and time.

Ask students to read in their books, "God Hears and Cares." Encourage them to start the blessing book right now where they daily record prayers God has answered. After each answered prayer, tell them to write, "God Hears and Cares."

End the lesson in prayer, thanking God for being the one who always hears and cares. You may want to form a circle and give each student an opportunity to thank God for a recent answer to prayer.

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before next week, read Exodus 16:1-5. Ask your students to think of how much they use bread and what ways they use it.

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## God Hears and Cares

Our God hears us. Our lives are loaded with answered prayers which are evidence that God hears our petitions, wants, and yearnings. Our God cares about what concerns us. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses..."

► *Start a blessing book where you daily record prayers God has answered. After each answered prayer, write these words, "God Hears and Cares." Begin that book now by writing here a prayer God has answered and thank Him for everything He has done for you because He hears and cares.*

### KEY VERSE

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

—1 Samuel 1:17, KJV

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

—1 Samuel 1:17, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 9 through September 15

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Striking a Fair Balance—2 Corinthians 8:9-15.
- Tue.** One Body of Believers—1 Corinthians 12:18-26.
- Wed.** The Lord Responds to Complaints—Exodus 16:9-12.
- Thu.** Conducting Daily Family Duties—Exodus 16:16-21.
- Fri.** Observing the Sabbath Day—Exodus 16:22-30.
- Sat.** Symbols of Remembrance—Exodus 16:31-36.
- Sun.** God Provides for the People—Exodus 16:1-8, 13-15.