

LIFE GROUP LEADERS!

Week #5 – a week that signifies that we’ve crossed over the half way mark in this season! It’s always crazy when we get this far into our season, as it always goes by so fast. I hope and pray that your groups have been going well, and that you’re getting amazing engagement!

⇒ PREPARATION FOR YOUR FIFTH MEETING:

- By now, you know what you’re doing!!
- As a reminder, if you have a staff or council member within your Life Group, do your best to make sure that they can attend the group without their roles in our church going in front of them. You can protect them when questions are raised about church matters, to connect with the staff or council member the following day. While it’s important that questions like that get the opportunity to be asked, our Life Groups are not meant to be those places! Remember, it’s our mission to develop **MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS CENTERED ON GOD’S WORD AND PRAYER.**

⇒ ATTENDANCE:

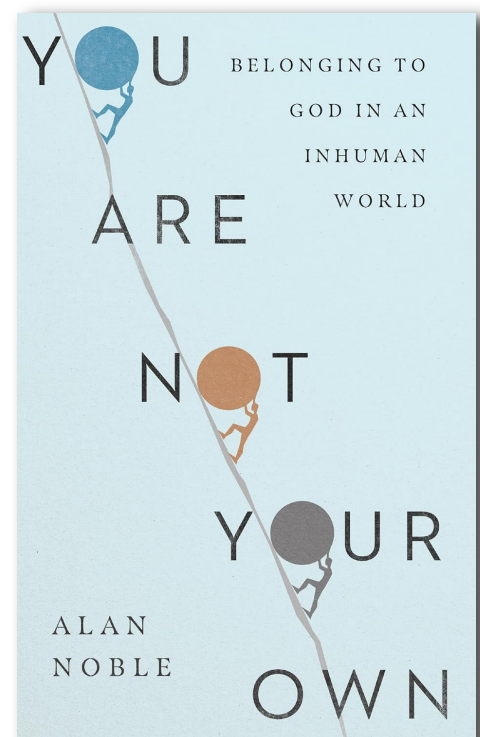
- Please, each week, follow the BLUE button in the reminder email to fill out your attendance!!
- Remember, that we don’t have a lot of measuring sticks for the health of this ministry, we rely on your feedback, and upon these attendance records.

⇒ PICTURE & A BOOK OFFER!!:

- When Pastor Justin introduced this series in the message on Judges 17-21, he talked about a book that was formative for him as he prepared for this whole series, called, “**YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN.**” I bought a copy for myself, and one for one of you!!! **How do you get a copy of that book?** Snap a picture of you and your Life Group this week, send it to me. Then, next week Friday morning, I’ll do a draw out of all the submissions, and announce the recipient in the leadership Podcast. Then I’ll have the book for you at The HUB on the following Sunday.
- Also, if you don’t win the book, you can find it on amazon, [HERE](#).

⇒ SERVE PROJECTS:

- Serving together is an important part of growing together! Head over [HERE](#) for a list of sites that we’ve pre-arranged. Pick a site and let me know what I can book for you and your group – remember, get your **BLUE SERVE SHIRTS!**
- Pastor Marcel wants to also invite our Life Groups to partner with the Mentor Groups in SUMMIT and EDGE youth groups, to hold up to the Lord students from Gateway. Let me know if you’re keen to learn more!! It’s a super neat way for our ministries to partner together.





GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LEADER NOTE: We always encourage you to start your meeting off in a light-hearted way, that encourages all your members to start talking, and to be given the chance to be heard! What we do here in the opening moments of our group, sets the stage for the coming discussion. These are the lowest risk questions! However, as your group gets more and more comfortable with the deeper conversations, limit your time here.

1. What is in the trunk of your car right now?

LEADER NOTE: From spare tires to snow brushes, to extra blankets, maybe even some extra snacks? Maybe a pile of receipts?

2. What song or band are you embarrassed to admit that you love?

LEADER NOTE: Some of us have guilty pleasures that we'd be cautious to admit. From a particular song from the 80's that you can still belt out, to that new group with a new sound that it completely outside of your normal preferences.



QUICK REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: These are two questions that have your group reflecting upon last Sunday's message. The first question will always be the same, and the second one is provided from our teaching pastor from the service.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you??

LEADER NOTE: Lead by example of taking notes during the message and modelling the behavior of being prepared for your group time. Encourage your members at this point to grab a sermon guide from the tables by the doors at the auditorium, or to print a copy off from the Livestream, Online Bulletin, page on the church website.

2. This past weekend Pastor Justin talked about the two voices speaking to Hannah (Peninnah and Elkanah), seeking to convince her to build her life on something other than God (which is idolatry). What are the things we are most tempted to place our identity in today.

LEADER NOTE: n/a



SCRIPTURE REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: In these initial weeks of this semester, follow these three questions as scripture is read. Encourage your members to even consider these three questions as they approach scripture on their own time! It's good practice and provides a good and helpful devotional pattern of reflection upon what scripture teaches.

READ 1 Samuel 1:1-20

LEADER NOTE: In the sermon guide, we printed before we got a chance to update the text reference – but get your groups reading **1 Samuel 1:1-20**.

1. What does this passage say about the character of God?
2. What does this passage say about fallen humanity and the world we are in?
3. Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace behaviors, and trust in my Savior?



DIGGING DEEPER

1. READ 1 Samuel 1:2 & 5. This wasn't the first time a barren woman was used by the Lord for His kingdom purposes. Who else faced similar circumstances? What do you think was the significance of God including these women and their plight in His plan of redemption?

LEADER NOTE: This might be a tricky question for some, as not everyone has a good handle on all the Old Testament stories. If you have someone in your group that is newer to faith, do your best to make sure that they don't feel uncomfortable, and don't draw attention to them. Lean into those who you know will likely know, and when someone is a little unsure, use this list of the stories to help catch everyone up to speed! Bonus points goes to those who can identify the New Testament example!

- Old Testament:
 - Sarah – Genesis 11:30, 16:1, 18:19-15
 - Rebekah – Genesis 25:21-26
 - Rachel – Genesis 29:31, 30:1, 22-25
 - Manoah's wife – Judges 13:2-5
 - Hannah – 1 Samuel 1:2, 19-20
- New Testament:
 - Elizabeth – Luke 1:7, 11-13

There are a variety of levels of significance. In no particular order and certainly not exhaustive – (1) God has His own timing and acts at certain times for very specific reasons. Holding back blessings and giving blessings as He sees fit for the good of His purposes. (2) In the Ancient Near East, a woman had her identity wrapped up in having children. From having security in producing heirs, to being able to live on land. There was more – back in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve fell into sin, and God was outlining coming curses, at v.15, God says this: *“And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* The word offspring here, uses some Hebrew background that points to “seed.” And it was common knowledge and understanding through this that all Hebrew held out hope for that they might have an opportunity to produce through their seed, the coming messiah, the hope of the nations. Not having a child, meant that a woman wouldn't feel like they could contribute to the advancement of their nation. (3) The theme of barrenness that the author of Samuel is picking

up on, depicts the state of the spiritual health of the nation of Israel. They're often found in places of dryness, of pattern, and ritual – having lost or misunderstood the relevance and importance of God's presence amongst them.

- **READ Psalm 13.** These barren situations point to Israel's distance from God. How have you felt God lift you from spiritual distance in your own life?

LEADER NOTE: This is a Psalm written by David, quite possibly in one of those many moments when he was being tormented by King Saul. Like what we saw in Hannah's life, in 1 Samuel, David's joy and praise of God, comes ahead of the answer to the prayer and provision of safety. In our own time, we face dark periods, moments of fear, health crises, and a variety of other things that make us feel distant from God. David's questions in v.1 & 2, become our question as our uncertainty rises through the trial. What happens a lot in these times of difficulty, is that the Lord draws nearer to us and through His Spirit, draws us nearer to Him, as He provides us a way.

2. READ 1 Samuel 1:9-11. In such a time of spiritual apathy and apostasy, Hannah turns to the Lord in prayer. What do you think was different about her faith, than that of the whole nation?

LEADER NOTE: This is a super interesting distinction in the whole narrative of the Old Testament. Much of what we see in how the Israelites live out their faith is through worship lead by the priests and Levites, and lived out through their rituals, ceremonies, and feasts. In scripture, we don't hear too much of a personal connection that people make with God. There are certainly a few – Noah, Moses, Abraham, to name a few. Here, we're told about Hannah, who has a profound understanding of who God is, and what He is capable of. Surely, there is some hope for this nation!

- **READ Matthew 6:5-8, & Philippians 4:4-6.** While we have the full vantage point of scripture, including this story with Hannah's prayer, Christ's teachings, as well as Paul's instructions, why is it that we often dismiss our need to turn to the Lord in prayer?

LEADER NOTE: On one hand, consider again our depraved nature, that outside of the Lord, we are quite incapable of doing much good for ourselves, and for the Lord. While our souls are wired with a link towards the Lord, our hearts and minds have been affected by the world around, and we become easily infatuated and distracted by worldly elements. On the other hand, consider our affluent North American culture. We have sorted out many of our difficulties on our own and ascribe our solutions to our own patterns! We have access to health care, bank loans, community over the fence, and to family that are both near and far. Some might say that we've squeezed God out of society and have little to no use for Him. While many are still faith driven, we only appeal to God when we face difficult moments and find gaps in our lives that we want Him to fill.

- What might we be able to learn from Hannah's example of prayer?

LEADER NOTE: It was emphasized through the message on Sunday that Hannah approach the Lord first in her need, and walked away filled with Joy, long before she received an answer from the Lord. Our posture in front of the Lord needs to be that we recognize that He is God, that we're not, and that in His right timing, and within His good justification, He will answer our request. We then, like Hannah, need to take joy in the Lord, that the situation we're facing, is then left in His hands, and not our own!

3. READ 1 Samuel 1:18-20. This doesn't sound like it was an immediate answer, there must have been more waiting on Hannah's part. Why does the Lord ask us to wait?

LEADER NOTE: The theme of waiting on the Lord is a major theme throughout scripture. From the women we looked at earlier who waited for the provision of children, to Moses who waiting in the wilderness for 40 years, David who waited to become king, to Jesus Himself who was 30 when His earthly ministry began. The Lord uses these periods of waiting primarily to prepare those involved to be ready for His activity that will happen in His perfect timing.

- **READ Psalm 27:13-14, & Isaiah 40:28-31.** What are you currently waiting on the Lord for?

LEADER NOTE: This can be a hard question to answer for your members, so be sure to allow for some space. Our stories of waiting will likely be a little different than what we find in scripture. We're not the nation of Israel waiting for entrance to the promised land, and we're not the Jewish nation anticipating the arrival of the messiah. We might be waiting for financial provision, for the gift of a life partner, for a career opportunity to arrive, for healing from a health crisis to freedom from emotional weakness. Allow your members the space and safety to be vulnerable, be gracious with everyone who shares at this point. Some might have not shared these struggles in public, others might just be coming to terms with their own journey's.

DISCUSSION NOTE: You might even want to talk with your members about what to do with your time, while you wait. Here's some things to consider sharing:

- Pray while you're waiting – let the Lord know you're trying to be patient, but that you long for answers, but are willing to accept His timing as perfect.
- Trust the Lord's process – the Lord will execute His plan, and usher you into it, but also,
- We're to do what we can, with what we've got. This isn't to say that we can sit on our hands, we may need to press into solutions that are in front of us – as those might just be the things the Lord is inviting you to do! Dive into scripture, converse with a trusted friend or spouse, connect with a pastor, seek out a counsellor.

- As Hannah felt joy following her request ahead of God's answer, do you feel the same as you wait upon the Lord? What can help point you to that same joy?

LEADER NOTE: Another potential question that will be difficult for some to answer, so again, be patient with responses from your members, and be gracious as some open up and share parts of their journey, and the patterns of how they live out their faith. Remind them, if necessary, that our groups are safe places to work out these elements of our faith.



TAKING IT HOME

READ Judges 18:24, & 1 Samuel 1:24-28. Contrasting narratives here depict the heart that the Lord desires for us as He has granted us all that we need for this life. What is the posture of our hearts that we're challenged to have? Is this an easy or difficult posture to maintain in life? Why?

LEADER NOTE: Micah made an idol of Yahweh for himself, and the Danites came and took it. He was left feeling like everything was taken from him. Hannah pleaded for a gift, and when she received it, she willingly gave the gift back to the Lord. We're faced here again with our posture towards God and His provision for us. Are we trapped in our thinking and patterns that we've provided for ourselves? If so – we'll be just like Micah when we lose what we have. Or do we consider that everything within our grasp is the Lord's at the onset? If so – we'll be able to model Hannah's pattern and see that the Lord is blessed ahead of us. Certainly a difficult pattern to live out in life, as it is quite counter cultural to consider that nothing is really ours anyways.

Be sure to close your meeting in a word of prayer holding up each other's joys and sorrows to the Lord.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

LEADER NOTE: This following question is completely optional, and is intended for the participants' personal reflection. But do feel free to explore using the question within your groups meeting.

READ Psalm 63. This Psalm reminds us of Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1:11. Have you ever pleaded with God for something, earnestly like Hannah did? What was that all about? How did it pan out? Perhaps you are pleading with God currently, about a health crisis, a broken relationship, financial burdens, or a wandering child (etc.). How does a Psalm like this, and Hannah's prayer leave you encouraged?