

# Loving a Child

By Douglas Wood

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read Psalm 127:3. This verse speaks of children being a gift from the Lord. Prepare to share how a parent can acknowledge that gift to the Lord.

### Assignment Two

Prepare to share your testimony with your group. How did you come to know Jesus and dedicate your life to Him? How old you were when you made that decision? How were you or do you think you will be serving Jesus when you are twenty-five? when you are fifty? when you are seventy?

### Assignment Three

As part of an **On Your Own** assignment, the others in your group will list elements of love as expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Study 1 Samuel 1:26–28. Prepare to share examples of Hannah’s unconditional love for Samuel that illustrate elements of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.

## Scripture to Memorize

*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.* Psalm 127:3

## Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand and recognize some of the basic biblical evidences of unconditional love for a child.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Children come in all shapes and sizes. They are kind of like puppies when they are young, lovable and sweet. But what if your future child grows up to be an angry, pit-bull teenager? How do parents love their children unconditionally the way God's Word instructs them to do? You may or may not have children, but you can discover how to love children in the good times and in the bad. Do you know what the Bible says on that topic?

**Read** 1 Samuel 1:26–28 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

Hannah was the first wife of Elkanah, whom he greatly loved. However, she had been unable to have a child, unlike Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah. This caused hurt and jealousy between the wives and in the family. However, in God's perfect time, he allowed Hannah to give birth to a son.

### On Your Own

Read 1 Samuel 1:20 and 3:19–21. Who was this son and what did he do? In the space below, write his name and what his role was among God's people.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 26. praying to the LORD.** Hannah was not without hope in her desire to have a child. She prayed constantly and fervently for God to allow her to have a child she could love. This example teaches us that God answers sincere prayers in ways that bring Him glory and work for the ultimate good of His children. God hears and receives our prayers. "The LORD has heard my plea, the LORD accepts my prayer" (Psalm 6:9).

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share how a parent can acknowledge to the Lord the gift of having a child.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 27. For this child I prayed.** Hannah loved God and loved her husband. She desperately wanted a child to love and to grow in knowledge and favor with the Lord. She also knew that children are a gift of God, as presented in Psalm 127:3.

Her desire for a child led her to pray with a conviction that God would hear and answer in His own time. She shared the confidence of the psalmist who said, "But truly God has listened; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me" (Psalm 66:19–20).

**Verse 28. Lent him to the LORD.** What an act of love on the part of this new mother! She knew her son was a gift from God, and she quickly dedicated him back to God.

## Discussion Questions

Who are some of the other leaders in the Old Testament who were dedicated to God? What were their names, and what did God do through them?

## On Your Own

Imagine that you marry the love of your life and afterwards have a son or daughter. They meet Christ early in life and grows to love Him. A few months before high school graduation, they tell you that they believe Christ is calling her to spend the coming summer in the Middle East. They feel led to assist a team in planting churches. You know the region is unstable and that Christians sometimes are treated badly. As you consider whether to give your permission, many thoughts race through your mind. In the space below, write a prayer you might express to God in the midst of that situation.

## Studying the Passage

**Verse 28. as long as he lives.** Hannah knew her proper response to God's giving her a son was to lovingly give him back to the Lord. This is an example of unconditional love and is probably one of the hardest things any parent can do. When we have children, we do everything possible to protect them and keep them close to us.

Hannah knew she could not hold on to this precious gift given to her by God. She loved the Lord too much, and she loved her son too much to withhold the blessings he would experience in service to God. Hannah's example of love for her cherished child is something every parent should follow.

## Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share his or her testimony with the group. They also will share answers to these questions: How did you come to know Jesus and dedicate your life to Him? How old you were when you made that decision? How do you think you will be serving Jesus in the days ahead?

## Studying the Passage

**Verse 28. And he worshiped.** The disciple's response to following Jesus in loving obedience is to worship Him. There are times in our lives when we just know that Christ has moved and answered our prayers, and we must fall down before Him and worship.

## On Your Own

Many disciples refer to 1 Corinthians 13 as the love chapter of the Bible. In the space below, write the elements of love you find in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. After everyone is finished, make a group list on a board or visual on the wall.

## Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share examples of Hannah's unconditional love for Samuel that illustrate elements of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

## **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

## **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

## **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

## **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

Children are a gift from the Lord. Parents who are disciples desire to acknowledge that gift and to provide their children with unconditional love.

Consider the primary way Hannah responded to God's gift of a child in 1 Samuel 1:28. The greatest act of unconditional love parents can show their child is to dedicate that child fully and completely to the Lord.

Hannah showed this in the following ways.

- She acknowledged God's authority in this situation by praying to Him, trusting Him to answer (1 Samuel 1:27a).
- She acknowledged that God's sovereignty was displayed by His granting her petition (1 Samuel 1:27b).
- Her reaction to this gift was to dedicate her son back to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:28a).
- Her desire was for her son to follow God as long as he would live (1 Samuel 1:28b).
- Finally, her response to God's blessing was to worship Him (1 Samuel 1:28c).

Many see the "love chapter" of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, as something that relates to marital love or something that is read at a wedding. While those things are true, this powerful description of love can also be applied to the love parents have for their children. Parents can respond to children in ways that are patient, kind, not jealous, not bragging and not arrogant (see 1 Corinthians 13:4).

Disciples ask Jesus to give them hearts similar to Hannah's so they will be ready to dedicate their children fully to Him. Disciples also ask for hearts prepared to love their children with the pure love of Jesus and with the wisdom of Scripture. Disciples dedicate themselves to rearing children who bring great glory to God and who join Him in bringing His kingdom on earth.

### **Follow up Question**

*Can you describe in your own words the kind of love a parent should have for their children?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.