

Heritage of the Lord



Week Ten

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
1 Samuel 1:4-20

THAT CHILD TOO

Scripture informs us that children are a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5, KJV). The preposition “of” either denotes origin or destination—that is, children are a heritage given to us by God, and they are equally a heritage we return to God.

Just as an inheritance is not a result of one's toil or labor, so children are not, as is often considered to be the case, the fruit of parents' power and ability or a mere natural result of the coming together of a man and a woman. Children are a gift from God Himself!

Including the child born out of wedlock? Yes, even that child. And the child conceived in violence? That child too! Every child that is born is a blessing from God. What of the child who comes at an inconvenient time—when the parents are financially or emotionally unprepared? Or the child born with a disability? Even these children, the text affirms, are a gift.

Not only are children a gift from God, but when they are raised in the fear of the Lord, they are a gift returned to God. Parents may educate their children to be a force for good in an increasingly wicked world.



inScribe

Write out 1 Samuel 1:4–20 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out 1 Samuel 1:15–20. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?



Memorize your favorite verse in 1 Samuel 1:4–20. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How is God associated with your sense of self-worth?

How can your choice to have or not to have children not glorify God?



Read more at www.inverseible.org/will10-3

TEN SONS

Not everyone gets to choose whether to procreate or not. Some married couples try in vain for years to conceive, whereas others are surprised by a pregnancy when they are on birth control. Then there are those who would love to be parents but are unmarried, while others are culturally constrained to bear more children than they would prefer. Be that as it may, most couples entering into a consenting marriage are at liberty to discuss the question of whether or not to have children, and how many they should plan on.

For Hannah, having children was paramount. Although Elkanah clearly loved her more than he did Peninnah, the fact that he had taken a second wife who could bear him children speaks to the sociocultural (and perhaps even economic) pressure a married couple was under to have children. Peninnah, likely jealous of Elkanah’s love for Hannah, would not let her hear the end of it. Her identity and sense of self-worth were tied to her ability to bear children, and Hannah fell into a depression over Peninnah’s ridicule.

Seeing her distress, Elkanah tries to assure Hannah of his love. “Am I not better to you than ten sons?” he queries. (She could have asked the same of him when he went to marry a second wife! But that’s beside the point.) At a practical level, Elkanah was appealing to his wife not to miss out on the blessings she already had for want of more blessings. If children were the fruit of love, then should the love itself not suffice?

In our walk with Jesus, we may find ourselves struggling with this problem. It is true that when Christ enters our lives, His very presence brings blessings, but we are constantly at risk of desiring the blessings to the neglect of the relationship that brings them. Is Jesus worth more to us than ten sons? I heard a highly educated, childless couple once quip that their PhDs were their babies. Whatever your sons may be, do you value Jesus more?

Given Hannah’s dedicated prayers for a child (and those of others in Scripture, like Zecharias and Elizabeth), infertility, apparently, does not indicate God’s displeasure. Couples who want children but have not received them are just as precious to Jesus as those with children. When the door to parenthood is closed biologically, there are still opportunities to adopt (whether a full legal adoption or not) children in need of parents, and this may be part of God’s plan to care for the “fatherless.”

Since couples with children and those without can have a dedicated relationship with Jesus, when a couple does have a choice, how are they to decide? One must consult their motives. If the motive is selfish, the resulting action will be wrong.

Ultimately, a Christian must ask if these children would bring glory to God. This was Hannah’s intention and why she pledged to return her son to the Lord.

DER MENTSH TRAKHT UN GOT LAKHT

There are those who feel that having children would be a sheer inconvenience requiring physical, financial, and emotional resources they feel could be directed elsewhere. Others might point to global overpopulation, or the general need to altruistically address pressing socioeconomic crises like slavery and poverty, before bringing more humans into this messed-up world. These same factors may contribute to the decision on how many children to have.

We must address the fact that family planning is very much a biblical principle. In Luke 14:28–32 Jesus presents a common-sense principle: before you undertake a project, you take time to plan for it. Whether it's erecting an edifice or engaging in battle, wisdom dictates that you plan ahead. Having children is certainly like building a home and could very well be likened to engaging in a battle. Before embarking on the enterprise, it is wise to take stock of what resources you have in order to determine the magnitude of the project you should endeavor to fulfill.

Our planning ought to be done in submission to God's plan. "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain," declares the psalmist. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," he continues, "for so He gives His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:1, 2). As the old Yiddish adage goes, "Der mentsh trakht un Got lakht." meaning, "Man plans, and God laughs." It is pointless to plan unless we're willing to submit those plans to God, who is ultimately in control.

Taking their cue from God's command in Genesis 1:28, some Christians advocate that married couples should procreate at every opportunity. If we applied the same reasoning to the very next verse, we would find ourselves advocating for gluttony, which is clearly not right (see for example, Prov. 28:7). Furthermore, God did not intend the sexual act between husband and wife only for procreation. Yes, procreation is one of the blessings and responsibilities that come with the privilege of sexual intimacy, but it is by no means the only one.

Christians must prayerfully consult their mission statement first. If having children would derail their individual mission or mission as a couple, then they need to determine if God is redirecting their mission. Likewise, if a couple cannot bear children, in consultation with their mission, they must determine if God is calling them to a lifework more easily fulfilled without children (e.g., traveling evangelist) or if they ought to adopt. Thereafter, practical considerations like finances and timeline should be factored into the decision about how many children to have.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

List all the factors to be considered when deciding the size of your family?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will10-4

Heritage of the Lord



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

- Genesis 1:28; 9:1, 7
- 1 Timothy 6:6
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Malachi 2:15
- Psalm 127



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with 1 Samuel 1?

Review your memorized verse from 1 Samuel 1:4–20.

ARROWS IN YOUR QUIVER

Who, after praying earnestly for something, turns around and gives it away? This is what Hannah did. In fact, before she even had the desired request, she committed to return her son to the Lord! This was not a metaphorical commitment to give her child to God. Once Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him to the house of the Lord and left him there. He was likely between the ages of three and five when she gave him up. Parents get emotional when their child attends their first day of school; how must Hannah have felt when she brought Samuel to the temple?

There is something even more profound about Hannah's sacrifice. At the time, there was major corruption in the temple service with Eli's sons doing the abominable. So Hannah was not delivering her precious child to the best possible environment. Yet, having done her best to train her child, she kept her vow to give back to God the thing she desired most. In a manner of speaking, she sent Samuel as a missionary to the temple, and God honored that gift by calling Samuel to be His prophet.

As a general rule, parents should think of their children as future fellow laborers in evangelism. Children must learn to trust and obey their parents as practice for how to trust and obey God, not because they are little minions. In fact, inasmuch as children must learn obedience, parents ought to treat them with due respect—the Bible counsels, “Do not provoke your children to wrath” (Eph. 6:4). While requiring obedience, parents are not to treat their children in a way that angers them. Your child may one day be your pastor.

Hannah's experience of giving her firstborn to serve in a corrupt community is reminiscent of God's gift to us of Jesus Christ. The well-known and well-loved John 3:16 gives us a glimpse into the heart of God. He had only one Son, and He sent Him as a missionary. Such is the love of God for humanity!

The Christian who is called to the same love that God has will recognize that their children are given to them as a trust to be rendered back in service to God. Just like an arrow in the archer's quiver, children are a means for Christian parents to further their evangelistic mission. The children of Christian parents are not there to provide entertainment for their parents and parents' friends; they are not meant to serve as work-horses; and they are not a “mini-me” who exists to wear miniature outfits for self-gratifying social media posts. Children from Christian homes are missionaries in training.

In August 1955, prominent American evangelist Billy Graham spoke of how frightening it was for Christian parents to raise their children in a world that had become lawless and wicked. That was in 1955! How much more wicked is the world today. How much greater the need for godly seed (cf. Mal. 2:15)! Indeed, it would make no sense to bring innocent children into this cruel, evil world, but for the advancement of God's mission to save the world.



inVite

How was Samuel like Jesus?



How can you plan to partner with God, the perfect Parent, in raising godly children?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will10-6



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?



After this week's study of the chapter, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications you can make in your school, family, workplace, and church?



Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inverseible.org/will10-7

CHILDREN FOR JESUS

“He who gave Eve to Adam as a helpmeet . . . ordained that men and women should be united in holy wedlock, to rear families whose members, crowned with honor, should be recognized as members of the family above” (*The Ministry of Healing*, 356).

“Children are the heritage of the Lord, and we are answerable to Him for our management of His property. . . . In love, faith, and prayer let parents work for their households, until with joy they can come to God saying, ‘Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me’ ” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 195, 196).

“I have a very tender interest in all children, for I became a sufferer at a very early age. I have taken many children to care for, and I have always felt that association with the simplicity of childhood was a great blessing to me. . . .

“The sympathy, forbearance, and love required in dealing with children would be a blessing in any household. They would soften and subdue set traits of character in those who need to be more cheerful and restful. The presence of a child in a home sweetens and refines. A child brought up in the fear of the Lord is a blessing” (*The Adventist Home*, 160).

“Care and affection for dependent children removes the roughness from our natures, makes us tender and sympathetic, and has an influence to develop the nobler elements of our character” (*Testimonies to the Church*, 2:647).

“Children are committed to their parents as a precious trust, which God will one day require at their hands. We should give to their training more time, more care, and more prayer. They need more of the right kind of instruction. . . .

“Remember that your sons and daughters are younger members of God’s family. He has committed them to your care, to train and educate for heaven. You must render an account to Him for the manner in which you discharge your sacred trust. . . .

“Before increasing their family, they should take into consideration whether God would be glorified or dishonored by their bringing children into the world. They should seek to glorify God by their union from the first, and during every year of their married life. . . .

“Parents should not increase their families any faster than they know that their children can be well cared for and educated. A child in the mother’s arms from year to year is great injustice to her. It lessens, and often destroys, social enjoyment and increases domestic wretchedness. It robs their children of that care, education, and happiness which parents should feel it their duty to bestow upon them.

“The question to be settled by you is, ‘Am I raising a family of children to strengthen the influence and swell the ranks of the powers of darkness, or am I bringing up children for Christ?’ ” (*The Adventist Home*, 161, 162, 163).



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Make a list of inappropriate questions to ask a newly-wed couple about their plans for children.

How is it possible for a childless couple to still fulfill God's command in Genesis 1:28?

What is the most precious thing God has given to you? Have you committed it back to Him?

How can your church get involved in the raising of children?

How did Hannah prepare Samuel, in such a short time, to be faithful to God?

How do we strike the balance between protecting our children from undue evil influences while encouraging them to be missionaries?