

What Do You Want God to Give You in 2012? What Do You Want God to Give Others in 2012?

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Elkanah's first wife, Hannah, was unable to have children. In those days (around 900 BC), Israelite men were allowed to take a second wife if their first wife was unable to have children. Elkanah's second wife was Penninah. They had several children. As you can imagine, this did not help Hannah feel any better. Penninah frequently taunted Hannah to the point of tears about her inability to have children. Elkanah attempted to make Hannah feel better by giving her favors. Of course, that only intensified the jealousy between the two women. It was a happy home!

Hannah went year after year to the Tabernacle and prayed for a son. She wept "in bitterness of soul" and prayed to the Lord to give her a son. If God granted her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord's service in the Temple for his entire life. It sounds like Hannah was making a bargain with God: "If you give me a son, I will dedicate him to you." While there was some bargaining going on, I think at a deeper level Hannah grasped the covenant principle that God blesses us to be a blessing. If God blessed her with a son, then she would give this child to God's service as a priest so that he could bless others. At the Tabernacle, the priest Eli noticed the earnestness of Hannah's prayers. At first he thought she was drunk. Hannah assured him that she was not. Eli did not know what her request was, but inspired by the Holy Spirit, asked God to grant her request.

God answered her prayer. Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son and named him Samuel which means "Heard by God". Hannah kept Samuel at home until he was weaned—around 3 years of age. Then she made the trip to the Tabernacle to dedicate him to the Lord's service for life. Can you imagine the mixture of feelings within her? She was attached to this young child, and it would be difficult to leave him at the Tabernacle.

Sadness filled her heart. Yet, she was also filled with gratitude for the gift of this child and found some comfort in knowing that he would be a blessing to others. Some of you know that mixture of feelings. You have dedicated your children to God. As they respond to God's call they are led to dangerous places in the world as missionaries or members of the armed services to protect our freedom. You are sad and fearful to see them go, but you are filled with joy that they are serving God and blessing others.

Listen to how the Bible describes Hannah's journey:

²⁴ After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. ²⁵ When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, ²⁶ and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.
1 Samuel 1:24-28

Samuel would be a great blessing to Israel. As an adult, Samuel would serve as a priest and judge. The Dictionary of Old Testament Historical Books, describes him with these words: "It could be argued that Samuel was one of the most successful of Israel's leaders. He came into prominence at a time when Israel was virtually bankrupt spiritually, highly divided politically and struggling economically and militarily." Under Samuel's leadership, the Israelites became much more united and spiritually aware.

Hannah discovered that you cannot out give God!

"And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters." 1 Samuel 2:21

Hannah knew what she wanted God to give her. And she knew what she wanted to give others. She wanted a son. She wanted others to be blessed through her son as he served God as a priest. She was blessed to be a blessing.

Today begins a New Year. I want us to focus on two questions this morning:

- What do you want God to give you in 2012?

- What do you want God to give others in 2012?

We've asked some members of our church family to come and share with us how they would answer those two questions.

SHARING OF CHURCH MEMBERS

How would you answer those questions?

In 2012, I want God to give me margin in my life. My schedule is so overloaded that God often gets crowded out. Time with family also gets squeezed. I want God's help to choose the things that matter to him. I want to create more space for God and for family.

I want God to give me greater trust in him. I get anxious and want things to make things happen according to my plans. I want God to help me trust him more—to know that he will accomplish his purposes through me. I want to depend more upon the power of the Holy Spirit and less upon my own strength.

In 2012 I want God to give others powerful experiences of worship in all our worship services: sanctuary, chapel and Praise. When people come on Sunday morning I want them to leave feeling they have connected with a living God who loves them.

In 2012 I want others to know and experience God's love and grace. I want God to open doors for our members to share their faith with others and invite them to join on the journey of following Christ.

In 2012 I want others to find a place of connection in our church where they are growing spiritually. I want others to experience God's transforming power to become all that he created them to be.

In 2012 I want others to experience Impossible Dreams of joining with God in his work of redeeming and restoring a broken world. I want us to expand our Impossible

Dream of providing for others access to clean water. I want others to have enough food to eat and a roof over their heads. I want others to have medical care when they need it. I want justice to prevail in places where people are oppressed and exploited. I want God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What do you want God to give you in 2012? Do you want him to give you deliverance from a destructive habit? Do you want him to deliver you from some hopeless situation? Do you want him to restore broken relationships? Do you want to experience his healing physically, emotionally or spiritually?

Which of the fruit of the Spirit do you want God to give you in 2012? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control? Do you want him to give you all of the above? Do you want to experience more of God's presence and power in your life? Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? Do you want God to give you more of himself?

What do you want God to give others in 2012? Are there persons you know who are in desperate situations? Do you feel helpless? What do you want God to give to them? Are there places in the world where you want to see God work to bring hope and deliverance for others? How do you want God to bless others? What do you want God to give others in 2012?

We begin the New Year sharing in communion. It reminds us of what God has already given us. He has given us his Son to die in our place that we might be forgiven of our sins, receive the gift of eternal life and join with God in his work of redeeming and restoring a fallen world.

We are going to take some time to meditate before we take communion. Silently thank God for all he has already given you. Before we say "Please" we say "Thank you" to

God. Locate the “gift cards” that were on your seats as you arrived. Hold this card in your hands during the meditation and look at the two questions. Ask God for those things you want him to give you in 2012. Then ask him for those things you want him to give others in 2012.

Meditation Time: soft background music

Bill will close mediation time with prayer.

Communion ritual/serve servers

Ushers direct persons to intinction stations.