

General Church Education



Family Lesson: I Samuel 1
The Birth of Samuel

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Family Lesson 8 - A

The Birth of Samuel
I Samuel 1

Family Talk:
THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

Rev. Donald Rose

The first verse of the book of Samuel tells us that there was once a man whose name begins with “EL.” The man's name was **Elkanah**, and this is the story of the birth of his son whose name ends with “EL.” This is **Samuel!**

Whenever you see the letters “EL” in a name in the Word, you will know that it has something to do with God. The name of the place **Bethel** means “house of God.” The name **Eli** in this chapter means “My God.” The name of the man in this story, **Elkanah**, means “God has created.” And the son he had was named **Samuel**. This means “asked of God.” His mother named him that saying, “**Because I have asked for him from the Lord**” (*I Samuel* 1:20).

There are other stories in the Word in which the giving of a name shows thankfulness to the Lord. When Judah was born (his name means “praise”), his mother said, “**Now I will praise the Lord.’ Therefore she called his name Judah**” (*Genesis* 29:35). The prophet Nathan’s name means “gift,” and can you guess what the name of the disciple **Nathanael** means? It has “EL” at the end, and means “gift of God.”

This is a particularly beautiful story in which we see that Elkanah loves Hannah very much and that they want a baby. Hannah prays and prays for a baby boy, and promises, “**I will give him to the Lord**” (*I Samuel* 1:11). This story of her giving or lending her child to the Lord has an important message for us. She said happily, “**For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him, therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord**” (*I Samuel* 1:27, 28).

The thing for us to think about is that every child, wherever born, really belongs to the Lord. We are told in the Writings that every little child, wherever born .”**is received when he dies by the Lord and educated in heaven**” (*Heaven and Hell* 329). “**The Lord is the one only Father to all in heaven,**” and that is why it is said in Matthew: “**One is your Father, He who is in heaven**” (*Matthew* 23:9).

Does this mean that parents are not to have the joy of feeling that their child belongs to them? No, it does not mean that. The Lord loves to give. Our very life belongs to Him. But He loves us to have the feeling that our life is our own. And when we have children, it is the Lord who gives that very strong love we feel for them. He gives it to us so that we may enjoy it fully and use it as wisely as we can. And we use that love wisely when we remind ourselves that all things really do belong to the Lord.

It is often said when a father and mother come to have a child baptized, that “it is in the Divine Providence of the Lord that this child was born and that she (or he) is committed to your care, so that by life in the world she (he) may be prepared for life in heaven.” (See the section on Baptism in the Liturgy.)

Parents know that when they have a child, the child will not be theirs forever. They know that the child will grow and have a home and probably a married partner. And since love takes delight in seeing the happiness of the one who is loved, parents are not sad when the child becomes independent and no longer needs their care. Swedenborg saw parents in heaven who met their children and rejoiced that it was well with them, and reminded them that the Lord is the Father of us all (*Conjugal Love* 406).

There is a wonderful truth which you can understand at least a little. It has to do with whether you belong to the Lord or whether you belong to yourself. The closer you come to the Lord, the more you will feel that you belong to yourself, and yet the more you will **know** that you belong to the Lord (*Divine Providence* 42-45)! You are supposed to have **both** kinds of happiness. The happiness of belonging to yourself means that you are absolutely free to do what you love to do. This is the way the angels feel. They are always doing what they love to do, and so they feel that they are their own masters. And yet, they see very clearly that they belong to the Lord.

Belonging to someone else is a special joy. When you get married and love someone the way Elkanah loved Hannah, then the two of you belong to each other. You belong to those who love you, in a way. And never forget that you belong to the One who loves you with a powerful, never-ending love. You belong to the Lord.

NOTE: *This lesson on the birth of Samuel is a particularly good one for the subject of prayer.*

We notice the phrase “ought to pray daily and this with humility” in the following quotation from the Arcana Coelestia.

"The things which man as a little child in its first age learns eagerly or believes, and which he afterward either confirms, or doubts about, or denies, are especially these:

that there is a God, and that He is One;

that He has created all things;

that He rewards those who do well, and punishes those who do evil;

that there is a life after death, in which the evil go to hell and the good to heaven, thus that there is a hell and a heaven, and that the life after death is eternal;

also that he ought to pray daily, and this with humility;

that the Sabbath day is to be kept holy;

that parents are to be honored,

and that no one must commit adultery, murder, or theft; with other like things.

These things man imbibes and is imbued with from early childhood; but when he begins to think from himself and to lead himself, if he confirms such things in himself, and adds to them things which are still more interior, and lives according to them, then it is well with him" (Arcana Coelestia 5135:2).

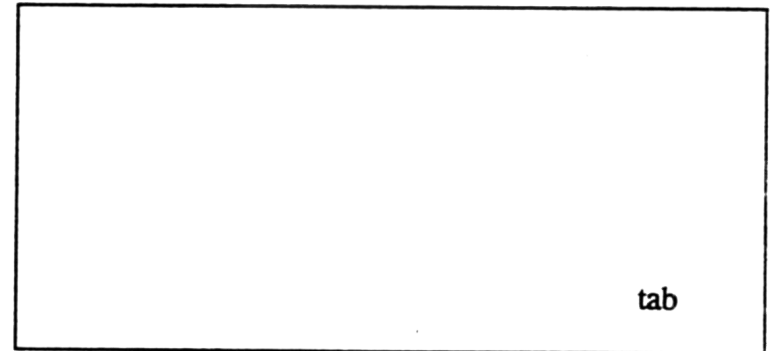
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LEVEL 1 – BABY SAMUEL

Cut out the baby and the tab.
Glue the tab to the back of Baby Samuel.

Cut the dotted line in the picture on the next page.
Put the tab through the slit in the paper, from the
front to the back.

The Lord gave Hannah the baby.
Slide Samuel from the Lord to his mother.

Hannah promised the Lord she would give Samuel
back to Him.
Now slide Samuel to the Lord.



As long as he lives
he shall be lent to
the Lord



The Birth of Samuel

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LEVEL 2 – HANNAH'S BABY

Hannah wished for a baby for a long time. Can you imagine how happy she was when the Lord sent Samuel to her? Samuel was very special to Hannah. We hope Samuel will be special for you too.

How to make baby Samuel

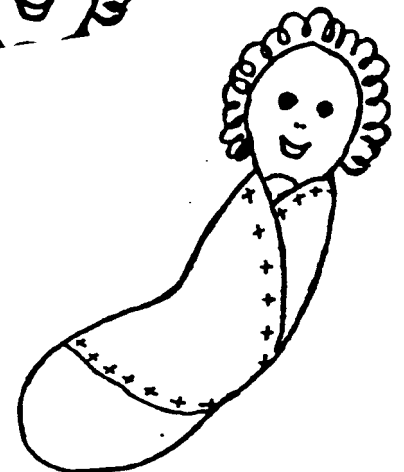
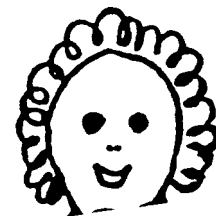
1. Ask your mother for a pink, white or tan sock. Stuff the toe of the sock (old nylons are good) for the head. Tie the head off with thread.

2. Stuff the rest of the sock for the body and tie off.

3. Sew on yarn hair. (Sew on loops and then cut the loops and separate the hair into strands. Hair can be drawn on with magic marker.)

4. Draw on the eyes, nose and mouth with magic marker (or you can use buttons for the eyes.)

5. Cut a rectangle of material and wrap the baby with a blanket. Fasten the blanket with a safety pin.



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LEVEL 3 – PRAYER

When you read or hear the story of Hannah, don't you feel sorry for her? Year after year she hoped for a baby, but she never had one. Her husband, Elkanah, felt sorry for her, too. He said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (I Samuel 1:8).

But Hannah was still sad, and went to the tabernacle. The Word says that Hannah was "in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish" (I Samuel 1:10). She then made a vow to the Lord that if she could only have a son, she would give him back to the Lord "all the days of his life" to serve in the tabernacle. Later, her prayer was answered, when she had a son and named him Samuel.

The Lord's Word tells us that prayer is "speech with God." Sometimes we pray aloud, but the Lord even hears our hearts when we are silently praying. Also, we are told that refusing to do bad things and living a good life is prayer.

Most often we use the Lord's prayer, which the Lord taught His disciples. He asks us to use it, too. But we often pray using our own words, which we are also asked to do.

Below is an example of how you might pray in your own words. Fill in the blanks, and you will have written a lovely prayer. Then copy the prayer carefully in the frame on the next page. *(Tip: put a piece of lined paper behind the page so the lines show through.)*

_____ (a name or names of the Lord),

You are _____ and _____ (qualities of the Lord).

You can _____ (some thing or things He can do).

I was _____ and _____ (feelings or actions you have felt and done).

I have _____ (things you may have done which were wrong).

But now I _____ (new feelings of sadness for past actions or thoughts).

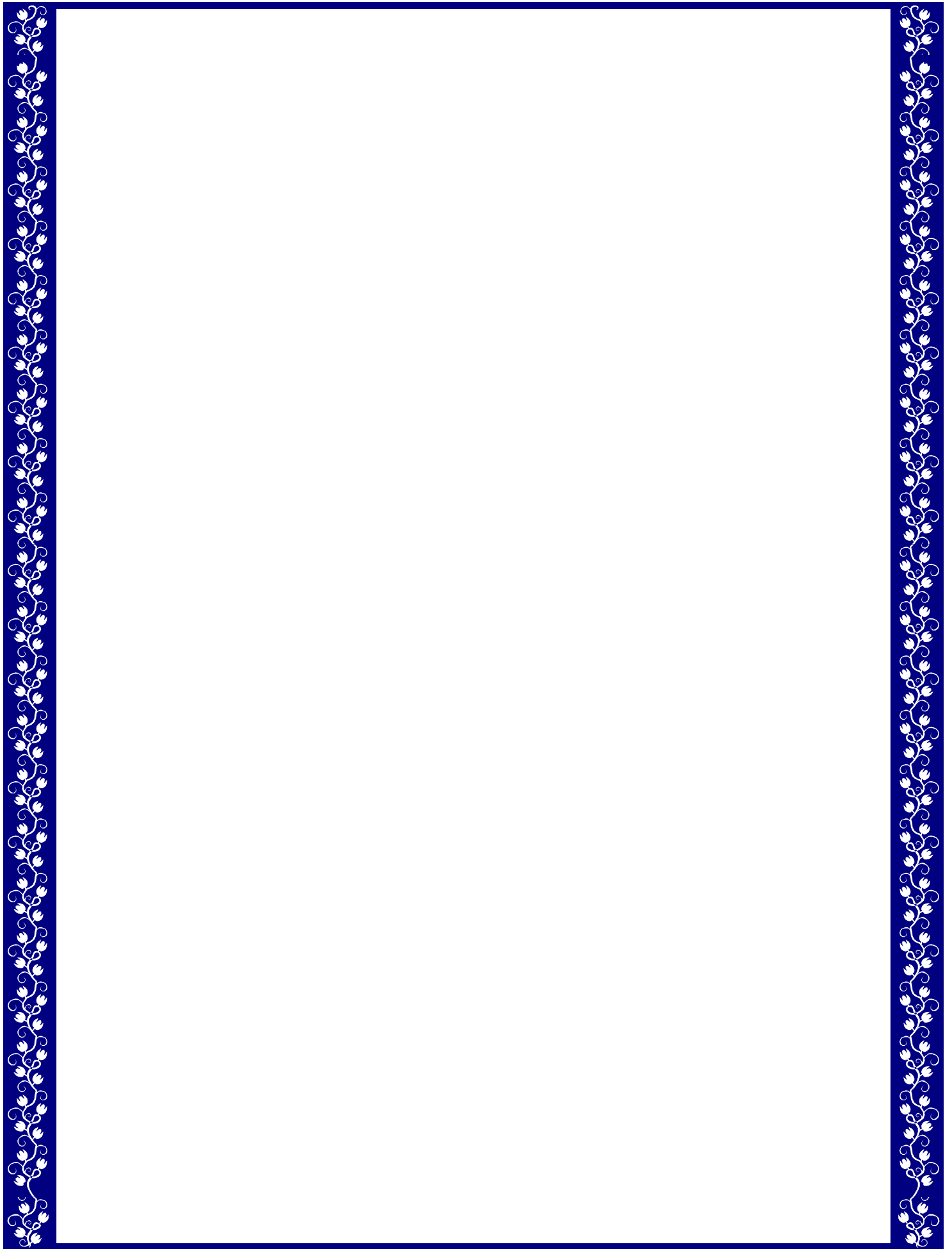
Please _____, Lord (asking for help).

I will _____ (trying to change).

Thank You for _____.

You are _____ . Amen.

(more qualities that you have now seen in the Lord)



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LEVEL 4 – HANNAH PRAYS FOR A SON

MATERIALS NEEDED

Incense Stick or Scented Candle

Matches

The last of the judges who led Israel into the period of the kings was Samuel. Now you have read the story of his birth. His mother wished for a son from the bottom of her heart, and earnestly prayed to the Lord to hear her anguish. Read her prayer (from I *Samuel* 1:11):



“O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your Maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

The Lord answered her prayer with the conception and birth of Samuel. Then the mother, Hannah, prayed again. This second prayer was a prayer of praise, not of asking for something.

Prayer is speech with God

Hannah’s two prayers illustrate what the Lord teaches us about prayer. The Word teaches us that **“prayer is speech with God”** (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535).

Hannah spoke with God in two ways—

- ❖ **to ask Him for something**
- ❖ **and to praise Him with thanks**

Both of these were what we would now call “spontaneous prayer”—speaking from your heart in your own words.

To burn the incense stick (or scented candle):

Please do this under parental supervision:

Put a dab of clay into a ceramic candle holder or on a plate.

Stick the incense into the clay so it is upright.

Light the top with a match.

What do you notice?

1. It takes fire to start it.
2. The smoke rises up to the sky.
3. The smell permeates the room.

Anything else?



How is incense like prayer?

Incense can help teach us things about prayer:

1. What do you suppose starts prayer, the way fire from a match starts incense? (Hint: what does *fire* stand for in the Word?)

1. What does the smoke rising up to the sky show about prayer?

2. The smell of incense fills the room. What do you think this tells about prayer?

(HINT: *smell* stands for feeling something (insight or perception. A *room* stands for an inner part of your mind where you keep your thoughts about the Lord and heaven.)

4. Did you notice anything else about incense that taught you something about prayer?

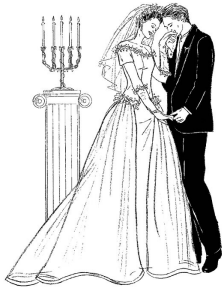
The Birth of Samuel ***I Samuel 1*** **LEVEL 5 – THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Hannah asked for a son

The word “ask” occurs three times in this chapter (verses 17, 20, and 27). The name of the book and its first central character is “Samuel.” Hannah had specifically asked for this child, so she named him Samuel, “because I have **asked** for him from the Lord.”

Something precious we can ask the Lord for

How do you ask the Lord for something? You pray for it. But what kinds of things should you pray for?



One very specific thing is one that could hardly be more personal—asking the Lord for a blessed marriage—a **“lovely partnership with one.”**

The book *Conjugal Love* assures us that **“for people who desire true married love, the Lord provides similar partners, and if they are not found on earth He provides them in heaven.”** (*Conjugal Love* 229).

Even at your age you can pray to the Lord, **ask** Him, for this precious gift. The Word tells us we should love, desire, and seek from the Lord a lawful and lovely partnership with one” (*CL* 49).

That word “youth” in the original language means an older age than you might imagine. It could be late teens or even up to thirty years old.

Of course, one cannot begin to ask for something that one has no idea of. When you are young, marriage seems so far away. But as you get closer to your twenties, that is something you begin to understand better and want more.

Preparing for this gift



Just asking is not enough. You have to prepare yourself for this gift. How do you do this? Well, learning from the Word what true marriage involves is very important. What you see and hear in the world around you is not going to teach you this. When you read the beautiful teachings in the Word about marriage you can begin to appreciate the great difference between a lovely partnership and things that are contrary to real marriage love. We are to turn ourselves away from these contrary things—**“spurn and reject roving lusts as an offense to the nostrils”** we are told in *Conjugal Love* 49.

What else can we ask the Lord for?

What else should you ask the Lord for? Perhaps you remember the story of King Solomon. When God first appeared to Solomon in a dream, He spoke to him, and do you know the very first word God said to him? It was the word “ask.” “Ask! What shall I give you?” (I Kings 3:6). Solomon considered carefully before he asked, deciding not to ask for things of relative unimportance. He asked for an understanding heart, and God was pleased that he had so asked. We, too, should ask for wisdom which is given to those who are good.

Did the Lord Jesus Christ on earth tell us to “ask”? Think about it. He not only told us to ask, He emphasized that if we do ask, we do receive. “Ask, and it will be given to you. . . . For everyone who asks, receives” (Matthew 7:7, 8).

You realize that life is not so simple that anything anybody asks will be given instantly. Sometimes the Lord knows that we don’t even know what we are asking, and we might not even really want it. Once the Lord said to two disciples who had made a request: “You do not know what you ask” (Matthew 20:22).


Remember Hannah’s prayer was answered because it was a good one. Your prayers will be, too, if they also are good.

Application

The most important things the Lord taught His disciples to ask for are stated in **the Lord’s Prayer**. This prayer is a perfect prayer, which, if we understand it and really mean it, will be granted.

Read the Lord’s Prayer in *Matthew 6*.

First, choose one part of the Lord’s prayer and write in detail about all the things you think it means. Discussing this first with your family will help you develop your ideas. You could do the same for one or more other parts of the prayer.



Our Father, who art in the
heavens, hallowed be Thy
name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, as in
heaven so upon the earth.
Give us this day our daily
bread. And forgive us our
debts as we also forgive our
debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us
from evil. For Thine is the
kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, forever. Amen