

# When We Are Apart

By Lee Yates



Every family's pattern of time alone and time together is different. Some families see each other often during each day, while others are separated by miles. What does it mean to be family when you're together and when you're separated from one another by distance?

**For**  
Teen Family

## Season

Spring

## Needed

Bible, writing paper, pens

## Activity Plan

1. Open in prayer. Here are some words if you need them:

*God, we appreciate having time together. Be with us also when we are apart. Amen.*

2. Distribute paper and pens. Ask family members to make a list of times they wished they could get away from the family for awhile. For example, children may recall times when they were young and planned to run away or times when a parent embarrassed them or was angry with them. Parents might recall times of feeling helpless or exhausted or times when they were embarrassed by their children's behavior. While listing these memories, write down what emotions were connected to each memory.
3. After everyone has jotted down a few things, share some of your stories. Make sure to use good listening skills and try not to hear critique or judgment in what others say.
4. Together, think of reasons family members might be separated for long periods of time. (Don't forget children who are very sick and being cared for in a hospital far from home, family members who are working far from home or serving in the military overseas, family members attending college, family members who are in prison, or grandparents who spend part of the winter in a different part of the country.) What is it like to be in a situation like one of these? What feelings are part of such separations? If your family has no firsthand experience with separations, imaging what emotions families might have in those situations.
5. Open your Bible and read aloud 1 Samuel 1:9-28, or use the text at the end of this activity. Give everyone a chance to offer their thoughts about the story. Together, list the emotions that you imagine the characters in the story experienced.
6. Use the following questions to discuss separations:
  - What are the challenges a person faces when he or she is away from family?
  - What comforts you when you are away from your family?
  - How can others help us when we are separated from our families?



- How might God be calling us to support families who are in the midst of a separation of some kind?

7. Close in prayer. Below are some words to use to begin, but also lift up prayer concerns based on the stories and ideas you shared during this activity.

*God, help us to grow stronger as a family when we are together and when we are apart. Be with families who are experiencing any kind of separation. Especially, we lift up the needs of ... Make us bold to believe in your promise to be with us and with all families always. Amen.*

## 1 Samuel 1:9-28

<sup>9</sup> After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. <sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup> As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. <sup>14</sup> And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." <sup>15</sup> But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. <sup>16</sup> Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." <sup>17</sup> Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." <sup>18</sup> And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

<sup>19</sup> They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. <sup>20</sup> And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord."

<sup>21</sup> The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. <sup>22</sup> But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever." <sup>23</sup> Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. <sup>24</sup> And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. <sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. <sup>26</sup> And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord." <sup>27</sup> For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord."

