

Hannah, a Godly Mother

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:1-11, 18-19; 3:1-18

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:9-20, 25b (starting at “and they brought the child to Eli”)

Key Verse: In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the Lord.” 1 Samuel 1:20

1 SAMUEL 1:9-20, 25B (NRSV UE)

1 Samuel 1:9-20

9 After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord.

10 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.

11 She made this vow: “O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.”

12 As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth.

13 Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

14 So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.”

15 But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.

16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.”

17 Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.”

1 SAMUEL 1:9-20, 25B (KJV)

1 Samuel 1:9-20

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way,

18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went her way and ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

19 They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her.

20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."

25b

25b ...and (they) brought the child to Eli.

and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.

25b

25b ...and (they) brought the child to Eli.

Key Terms

- **Apostasy** – The deliberate turning away from God (faith in and allegiance to).
- **Prerogative** – God's right to do whatever ensures his will is done.
- **Stigma** – A mark of shame or disgrace attached to a person or situation.

Introduction

In the first lesson, we saw Deborah bearing witness that God is a deliverer. The Lord rescues his people even when they are facing crushing odds. But that is God working at the national level. In this lesson, we see a witness of God working at the personal level: a barren woman

whose prayers God answered.

By a single revelation or event, God addresses both individual and national needs.

And although this happened at a personal level, it had great national importance. This is an amazing feature of the way God intervenes in human affairs. By a single revelation or event, God addresses both individual and national needs.

Telling the Bible Story

To grasp the intensity of Hannah's lament and pleading to God, you must feel the social and religious weight attached to barrenness in Hannah's time. It was seen as a curse that women dreaded. How would God reverse or cure this distressing curse in Hannah's life?

Also note that Hannah's vow (1 Sam. 1:11) was not a random vow of desperation. It resembled the Nazirite vow: a special vow of consecration designed to set a person apart for holiness and God's use. In a sense, this was puzzling. Hannah, desperate for a son, offered to give him back to God. This underscores the view that God chose Hannah rather than Hannah choosing God.

We see parallels of Hannah's barrenness with other cases of barrenness in the scriptures. However, the one that strikes deepest is the comparison with Elizabeth in Luke 1. Both women were desperate and had their husbands' support. But what really stands out is that their children (Samuel and John the Baptist) – God's response to their prayers – became mighty prophets of God. Both shook Israel on the national level.

Note also in the narrative some prideful, selfish human behavior, and the time God took to respond to Hannah. Poor, barren Hannah endured cruel ridicule from a per-

son who should have been kind. And this horror went on "year by year," often distressing Hannah. So, what is the witness here? In our period of grief and struggle, people close to us don't always respond with kindness. And, when we pray to God for relief, God does not always work in microwave-like time.

Sankofa

Many women in some African societies today still face the stigma of infertility that Hannah experienced. In Ghana, among the Akan communities, children are regarded as essential to the family's social status, necessary for the continuation of the family line, and for the building of wealth. Childless women are seen as persons who failed in fulfilling their social role to society. Child-

less women are likened in local proverbs to "landless persons," indicating a woman of diminished social value.

A similar outlook is held in Nigeria among some communities (Amakiri and Lopen). We hope that with time, as societies be-

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come more educated about the complexities of infertility, more enlightened Christian attitudes will develop, with fewer Peninnahs in society.

Case Study

In this study of the witness of Hannah's life, it is tempting to gloss over the fact that the Lord had closed Hannah's womb (1 Sam. 1:5). It is normal to rush to the "shouting points" in a text, as these are the keys to inspire faith. But in our rush to shout, we must not miss the signpost pointing to God's character and ways of working. Over the centuries, theologians and commentators wrestled with this point of God closing Hanna's womb. We note two of those opinions here.

John Calvin was clear that the closing of Hannah's womb was an act of divine prerogative, not punishment. For people who attribute all good outcomes to God and all bad results to the devil, this view may be hard to grasp. But it fits well with the overall view that Hannah was part of a divine plan by God to provide a faithful

prophet for Israel at a time when the nation was losing its way. Hannah was a respondent, not an initiator.

The Matthew Henry view is similar. It sees Hannah's infertility as a divine device fashioned to drive Hannah to earnest prayer and deepen her humility. It was part of a setup to get Hannah ready and willing to participate in God's grand design. Thankfully, Hannah passed the testing, playing her role well. However, the glory goes where it always belongs – to God.

Life Application

Apart from God and Hannah, the story has two other key players: Elkanah and Peninnah. Naturally, everyone wants to identify with Hannah. It is so wonderful to have a witness of answered prayers. Still,

we cannot forget Elkanah and Peninnah because their roles bring the matter right home to us. As you reflect on the text, ask yourself in what ways you act like those two individuals. Are you the type of person who, like Peninnah, looks down on others who don't seem to have the

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blessings that you currently enjoy? Your source of haughty pride doesn't have to be children. It could be a career, an academic degree, or a position in ministry. Do people look at your parading of yourself and feel pain? That is the Peninnah mindset: a haughty, self-righteous posturing.

Alternatively, are you of the Elkanan mindset: empathizing with people in their struggles, and doing what you can to encourage and assist them? Please, during a time of private meditation, check yourself against both models. Based on what you see in your thinking and behavior, commit to doing better. Prayfully, ask God to lead you away from the unchristian Peninnah attitude to more of the Elkanan disposition. People in despair need our encouragement and support, not our taunting. Elkanah's attitude pleases God, so the Holy Spirit will

help you to develop it.

Questions

1. Why was Peninnah's behavior included in the text?
2. Any thoughts on why God took years to respond to Hannah?
3. Was Hannah's vow a desperate bargain with God, and why did she make it?

Closing Devotions

Closing Hymn: "Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus (AMECH #440)

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, I know that I can bring my struggles to you for answers that are right for me. Please calm my anxiety during the waiting period. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 15-21

Monday	Romans 1:8-12 (Encouraging Each Other's Faith)
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 15:30-34 (Choose Your Friends Wisely)
Wednesday	Proverbs 18:19-24 (A Friend Closer Than a Brother)
Thursday	Ruth 1:11-18 (Friends When All Is Lost)
Friday	John 15:9-17 (The Greatest Love)
Saturday	1 Samuel 20:16-17, 32-34, 42 (Fierce and Faithful Friends)
Sunday	2 Samuel 1:17, 19-27 (A Death in the Family)