

# 1 Samuel 1 • The Birth of Samuel

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As we get ready to start 1 Samuel, I don't want to take a great deal of time with an introduction, just so we can get into the Word. But I love these books. 1 and 2 Samuel are wonderful narratives of the end of the period that we call the period of the judges, and the beginning of the period of the kings, and the reign of the kings in Israel.

Samuel, the one who these books are named after, is the last of the judges. He was an incredible man. He had an incredible beginning. And he had an incredible life and an incredible ministry. But more than that, he had an incredible statement made about him by God. This is something that you may not remember readily, but if you have ever studied through the Book of Jeremiah— and by the time Jeremiah came along and his prophetic ministry happened, Samuel was long since gone— but God spoke to Jeremiah about Samuel. He coupled him with the man Moses in a most incredible statement; and here is what God said.

Now here is— you guys know— what was going on at the time of Jeremiah: great apostasy, great evil and wickedness in the nation of Israel. God basically sent Jeremiah as a prophet to the people to say, it is all over except for the crying, basically. Nebuchadnezzar is coming. He is going to take over. He is going to demolish the city, and you are going to be taken into exile. Wonderful message. Wouldn't you love to have been Jeremiah? But there was a point at which God said, Don't intercede anymore for the people, for the nation of Israel. He was telling Jeremiah, Don't intercede anymore because I have made up my mind. This is going to happen.

Now, here is what God said. Listen to this. He said, Even if Moses and Samuel were to cry out to me, I would not listen (Jeremiah 15:1). I've made up my mind. This is going to happen. I thought about that. I thought, He said, even if Moses and Samuel cried out to me. That puts those men on a pretty— well, it's a pedestal in my mind anyway— of the kind of intercessors that they were. Moses, humble man, got down on his knees and prayed for the people of God.

Samuel, same kind of a guy, prayed for God's people, loved God's people, was offended when God's people rejected the Lord. God had to speak to Samuel and

say, Hey, listen buddy, don't be offended; it is Me they have rejected, not you.  
(1 Samuel 8:7)

But that was just Samuel's heart: loved the people, prayed for the people. So much so that God would say hundreds of years later, even if Moses and Samuel prayed, I wouldn't listen. Wow.

And what we are going to see here, at least in the section here that we are going to cover tonight is, we are going to learn about the birth of Samuel and the circumstances around that birth. Samuel is going to remain a small boy at least in our study that we get through here tonight. But the circumstances surrounding his birth are quite amazing.

And it begins in 1 Samuel Chapter 1 this way; it says: *“There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim (and by the way, that means Twin Heights, go figure) of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah (Elkanah means, God has created. And then it gives us his pedigree– if you will– his history, his background, his family. He was) the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, son of Zuph, (And it says he was) an Ephrathite.” (ESV)*

In the lineages, by the way, in 1 Chronicles, we find out that Elkanah was of the tribe of Levi so being a Levite would mean he was in the priestly line. That would, of course, mean that Samuel, who will be born to him, will be the same.

But it tells us here that, *“He had two wives. (in verse 2. And it says,) The name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.”*

Stop there if you would for a moment. A couple of things we want to make note of. First of all is the issue of polygamy and how it comes up in the Scripture all the time. People will ask from time to time, Why is there polygamy in the Old Testament? Is it something that God approves of ?

The answer to that is, No. It was never God's intention for polygamy to be a part of marriage. Elkanah more than likely took a wife after he discovered that Hannah was not conceiving. It was a very important thing for an individual, for a family, to carry on their family line. Absolutely huge to not let your name die out in Israel was huge. So much so that if a man died before he was able to produce an heir, by Mosaic law it was the responsibility of his brother– if he had one– or nearest relative if he didn't, to take that woman– the wife of the deceased man– into his home, marry her. and have children with her in the

name of the deceased relative so that the name of that man would not die out. It was absolutely huge.

Because Hannah wasn't producing children, we are assuming here that Elkanah took another wife so that he might have an heir. Obviously, the importance of having children in that culture, I think you probably know and understand. It was absolutely enormous.

But I want to talk here just quickly, just very quickly, about polygamy. Let me just say this, just because it is something in God's Word doesn't mean that God endorses that thing. It is an immature conclusion for a person to come to say that because something is in the Bible, God approves it. I have come up against those arguments, and usually they are brought up by unbelievers— although it's possible for a new believer to make the same error— to quote something from the Bible to say, well, in the Bible...

For example, later on here in the books of Samuel we are going to read that Saul had fallen into such disfavor with the Lord that God was no longer answering him when he prayed. We are going to see king Saul, who was the first king of Israel, go to a witch— a medium— to try to bring up Samuel from the grave so that he might consult Samuel about the war that was going on with the Philistines at that time.

We will see it at the end of this book. And believe me, we will deal with it at the time. So they have a seance. There is a seance in the Bible. I actually had someone point to that, at one point, and use it as a proof text that that sort of thing is okay. You see, consulting the dead is okay, because look-it, right there at the end of 1 Samuel, they have a seance, and it was successful. We will talk about it when we get there.

But once again, it is a very immature belief or position to say that, because something is in the Bible, that God endorses it. Boy, we saw things in the book of Judges that were horrific, the way people treated other people. And if we are going to use those as a proof text for how we are supposed to live, you might want to be looking over your shoulder because the police might be coming to your door.

I mean, there are flat-out illegalities that go on, even if it were done in our country today. There is a great deal of difference between the Bible telling about something and the Bible teaching something. Do you understand? What does the Bible teach? Does the Bible ever teach a man to have multiple wives? Never. Not once. When Jesus finally comes onto the scene during his public

ministry, and He discourses on the subject of marriage, he makes it very clear that God's original intent was for there to be one man and one woman to make up a marriage.

But the other thing that Elkanah's taking a second wife allows us to see in this otherwise godly man is a bit of a character flaw as it relates to how he responded to a very difficult situation, which is, again, his wife was not conceiving. It allows us to see how he dealt with the situation. Life does that, don't you know?

Life does that for you and me. It allows us to see how we respond to difficult circumstances in our lives. When something seems to be completely out of your control and when you become frightened or concerned about that situation, how are you going to respond? We see here in this passage as we continue— and we will continue finishing through this chapter and even a little bit further. We are going to see that there is no reference here in the Word in these chapters about Elkanah ever praying for his wife concerning her barrenness. Instead, what he does is, he takes matters into his own hands.

That is what we often do as well, don't we? We are faced with a situation, it looks impossible. He has been married to this woman, no doubt for a period of time. She is not conceiving; she's not conceiving; she's not conceiving. It is just not happening. And so what does he do? Well, again, there is no record of Elkanah ever praying for his wife, but he simply takes another woman to be his wife, that he might have children through her.

So his response was to handle it himself. And we find the same thing in many Christians' lives. I have done it myself. Haven't you? Huh. I mean, haven't we all? Haven't we all faced situations and just looked square in the face at what appeared to be an impossible circumstance and just said, Well, we just got to... And don't you know that is when the enemy loves to come and whisper in your ear and say to you, If you don't do something about this, it isn't going to get done. So if I were you, I'd get busy.

And we all love to hear those statements that are not in the Bible. No, we don't. I'm just being sarcastic. But those statements like, God helps those who help themselves, and other nonsense that seems to help justify this attitude of resolving my issue myself. I've got marriage problems. So what am I going to do? Well, I'm going to take it in my own hands. I've got financial problems. What am I going to do? I'm going to take it into my own hands. I got relationship problems with my family, extended family, what am I going to do? I got problems with employment. I got this, I got that. What am I going to do?

The natural tendency, the natural man does what Elkanah did. I got a problem. My wife isn't having children. What do I do? I need a new wife. In his case, another wife. He loved Hannah, and in the rest of what we frankly hear about Elkanah is really pretty positive. He is a godly man from the standpoint of his heart of desire to worship God and so forth. But in this particular instance, rather than praying for her, he just, Well, we're going to add to the home here.

Oh, I tell you, if there is one thing the Bible shows, it is some serious problems that attend a home, a polygamous home. But let me give you another example. There was another man in Scripture whose, –oh, there were several actually– but there was another one of note whose wife was also barren.

And that was Isaac, the son of Abraham– you guys probably remember– married Rebecca, and she wasn't having children. And he saw that it wasn't happening. And back in those days there were no fertility clinics. There were no doctors you could go to, and there was nothing they could do beyond the natural means of conceiving, and it wasn't happening. It was out of his hands. And Isaac knew that it was out of his hands. What do you do when you are facing a situation, and you know that you know that would know that it's out of your hands? Let me show you what Isaac did. I love this verse.

**Genesis 25:21 (ESV)**

*And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*

*And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, (it says. Why?) because she was barren. (And then it goes on to say,) And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.”*

Now, it may not always happen exactly that way when you pray about something, you get an immediate answer, or at least as immediate as it might sound in this particular passage. That's not the point. The point is what Isaac did. It is not really what the Lord did in response. It was Isaac's heart that I want to really highlight here. Isaac was a man of prayer. Isaac was a man who knew and understood that when he was facing a situation. And by the way, ladies, just a little tip. Guys don't like to face situations for which they have no answer, okay?

Just so you know that. And, oh, and one more thing, ladies. When guys are facing a situation for which they have no answer, they get angry. And they start throwing things, usually. That's the way guys respond to pretty much any stimulus in life. They pretty much get angry. And, when they're afraid, they get

angry. When they're angry, they get angry. When they're frustrated, they get angry. It's just a guy thing. I'm not excusing it. But, it's funny because Rebekah became pregnant. She had two boys, Esau and Jacob. Jacob faced the same thing. He married the love of his life. And she, too, was barren.

He didn't respond like his daddy did. He didn't respond— you know what he did? He got angry. (Genesis 30) She came to him, and she said, I want a baby! —as if he could do anything about it himself. Now if he had taken his daddy's cue, what would he have done? He would have dropped to his knees. He would have said, sweetie, give me your hand, let's pray, right? But you know what Jacob did? You can read about it. He snapped at her. He said, Am I in the place of God that I can do anything about it? What are you coming to me about it for?

It's a guy response. It's not excusable, but it is a guy response because we don't like to feel out of control. Not saying that women do. But, particularly men who are occupational anyway don't like to feel like they're useless, don't like to feel like there's nothing they can do about a situation. So when they're facing something for which there's nothing they can do, they immediately become frustrated.

But I love the example that Isaac gives us. He is a man of prayer. I wish Elkanah would have been a man of prayer in this respect too because it appears as we go on with the story that God was determined to give them a child. Not just one, too, but several. She ends up having like six babies at the end of this thing. So God was very gracious, and He longed to be gracious in the situation. If only Elkanah had responded in faith.

But again, you and I have a choice every time we face a situation that we can't control. We can give it to God in prayer, we can trust Him. Or we can do like Elkanah, we can take matters into our own hands, need a new wife, need another one, let's just add to the chicken coop.

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have submitted that. You know what I'm saying? Let me just add, you add to the thing here, and we'll just keep going and so forth. And, here's the problem. Here's the problem with what Elkanah did. It worked. It worked. That's the problem. Wouldn't it be great if every time we stepped out on our own, it didn't work.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every time we stepped out on our own, we fell flat on our face, and there was absolutely no fruit or good that could potentially even come from it, and we'd all go, oh, well, yeah... But sometimes God allows us to step out in disobedience, and what we do actually temporarily works.

But you guys know the problem. You step out once doing your own thing and then the next time you face a situation, it's just that much easier to step out again. And then the next time you face a situation, you step out again, and you just fix it yourself. And then the next time, and the next time, and the next time, and pretty soon, you are not trusting in the Lord for anything.

Your life is absolutely being lived in the flesh. And then, something really bad happens, and you step out, and it doesn't help at all. And you are wondering why, and you come crying, What is, does God hate me, or what, I don't know, what is it? And what it's been a progression of fixing your own problems, instead of trusting in the Lord with all of your heart.

We're all guilty of it. The question is, are we willing to recognize it and repent, and stop, get your hands out of the cookie jar, and stop trying to fix your problems yourself. and trust in God to take care of it.

Let's keep reading. It says in verse 3, speaking now, continuing on about Elkanah, *“Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, (because the city of Jerusalem was still under the control of the Canaanites at this time. So Shiloh is) where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were serving as priests of the LORD.”*

This is actually a fairly positive statement about Elkanah. In this respect; he was a godly man. He sought the Lord. He came yearly according to the law of Moses. He was to go yearly. It was about a 15-mile journey for him from his home to Shiloh. And he came regularly to worship, regularly to offer sacrifices. It was an annual sort of a thing.

And it says: *“<sup>4</sup> On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.”* Notice that. *“All her sons and daughters.”* This gal had a lot of babies for Elkanah. And she was able to do what he wanted her to do. Problem is, he really didn't love her. I mean, he probably— I don't know what we thought of her. All we know is that he loved Hannah more, but she produced a lot of children for this man.

It says here that he would give portions when they went up to sacrifice. I hope you guys got to hear both of Tom Velasco's messages that he taught while I was gone. Sue and I actually had a chance to listen to him while we were coming home. And we just listened to it after the fact from the website, but I loved what he taught about.

You guys, on— I think it was the first Sunday, we listened to him back to back, so I get him mixed up as to which one he did first, but I believe it was on— the first Sunday he talked about how the sacrifices that were brought to God were many times, most often fellowship offerings. Do you remember him talking about that?

Fellowship offering was an offering when a worshiper would bring an animal to the priest. The priest would slaughter the animal, sprinkle some of the blood. They would burn up the fat of the offering, but they would basically do a barbecue with the rest. And you would invite your family to sit down.

The priests and their families would also benefit from this kind of barbecue thing. And you would all sit down and have a common meal. It was considered a fellowship meal because you were consuming some of the meat. God had consumed some of the meat on the altar. And in a sense, you are sharing a common meal with God.

It's a fellowship offering, all right? This is what is going on here in 1 Samuel when it says that he gave portions to his wife Peninnah, and all of her children. They were sitting down, and they were partaking of the fellowship offering.

Well, goes on to say in verse 5, *“But to Hannah he gave a double portion, (Why?) because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.”* Elkanah is a typical guy. I mean, he is a guy's guy. He is going to try to make up for all these things by giving her more to eat. I'm not sure how successful— I don't think it was successful at all— but he's just a guy. He is trying to do what he can do.

It's like, honey, notice that Peninnah got one steak; you get two! Sort of a thing, and more baked potatoes and stuff like that. And he just— I'm not sure you want to do that with your wife— but he's doing what he can. He is doing what he can to show her, I love you. You're special to me. That's what he is trying to say.

We guys... Ladies. I knew this was going to be a little bit of a talk on marriage tonight. Can I just tell you something, ladies? We men, we are the dumbest lovers in the world, okay? I mean, we try, and we try, and we try, and we fail, and we fail, and we fail. I mean, we guys, oh my. And women, I don't know— the younger ones anyway— they're hoping that he's going to get it right.

Then they get older, and they realize that we really don't have the goods. And we try our best, and we try, and pretty soon they get to the point where they go,



You know what, I love you because you try. But we're just, we're idiots for the most part. And it's like, honey, here's a steak; I just love you.

And that's Elkanah. In fact, he is going to say something else here, really dumb. Just a real guy thing, but that's just the way things are. So he gives her double portion. But you know what, it doesn't help because in verse 6 we find out that *"her rival (and of course that's Peninnah) used to provoke her."*

And I want you to notice here in the ESV, the word that is used to describe that provocation is *"grievously."* She provoked her grievously. Your Bible may have a different word, but it was— and you will notice, it even tells us why— it was *"to irritate her."* It was just to irritate her. And she would— I don't know what she said.

Do you guys understand? In that culture, a woman who didn't conceive was considered to be cursed of God. She was considered to have some secret sins for which others were not aware, except for the fact that this woman was obviously not conceiving children. Therefore, the conclusion was clear in most people's minds. This is a cursed woman. And so who knows how cruel Peninnah could have been to Hannah. But it says she grievously provoked her, simply *"to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb."*

I want you to notice this was not a one-time thing. This wasn't a two-time thing. This wasn't a three-time thing. Look at verse 7. It says: *"So it went on year by year (this is going on). As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept,..."* And she was so upset.

And ladies, you know what this is all about. She was so upset she couldn't even eat. She wouldn't even, she completely just took away her appetite because she was in such a state of grief. And here is where Elkanah tries again. Boy, poor Hannah.

But Elkanah comes and says to her, *"<sup>8</sup> Hannah, why do you weep? (And you have to wonder if he has been living in the same house. Why do you weep?) And why do you not eat? (Just eat) Why is your heart sad? (And then look at this statement) Am I not more to you than ten sons?"* He's basically asking the question, if his love for her isn't enough. Sweetie, isn't my love enough?

Am I not more than ten sons to you? She is gracious not to answer. She just holds her tongue here. She doesn't want to make matters worse. But he really doesn't understand the depth of her pain. He is trying to do what he can, but this is the point where Elkanah should be praying for his wife and not trying in vain

to say dumb men things. He should— guys, this is where we need to take our wives by the hand and say, sweetie, let's pray.

Oh yeah, but we did that already. Fine. Let's pray again. And let's pray again. And let's pray again. And let's pray again. Let's keep praying. Let's keep bringing this before the Lord. We don't know what God is going to do, but let's keep bringing it before God. Guys, we can't get tired of praying with our wives.

We just can't. For you guys that struggle praying with your wife, get over it. It's your job. It is your priestly ministry. Bottom line. I'm sorry, but that's just it. You don't get an easy, quick out on this one. You don't get a get-out-of-jail-free card. Pray with your wife. Pray with her. Get used to it.

I know there can be all kinds of issues. Yeah, I counseled a couple years ago, and we were dealing with this issue of praying, and I realized it wasn't happening. So I sent him home with some homework, and I said,— I told him— I want you to go home and pray with your wife. And they came back a week later, and I said, Well, how's the prayer going?

She rolled her eyes, and he just looked at me with a blank look. What's up? Did you pray with your wife? No. Dude, I told you to pray with your wife. Pray with your wife. It's just you and her. I mean, Good grief, this is the woman with whom you should be intimate in every capacity. Not just physically. Marriage is intimacy on every level. Emotional intimacy. Spiritual intimacy. And so on, and so on. Turned out— we talked for a while. Turned out— that way early on in their marriage, he had prayed in front of her, and she kind of corrected him.

He basically said at that point, I'm never going to pray again in front of her. I understand those things, Okay. I understand the emotional stuff that can go on that can cause a person to just shut down and say, well, you know what? But you know, we get our feelings hurt, and we stop being obedient to God.

That's the bottom line. A priest, and men, you are the priest of your home. You are the leader of your home. You are the head of woman as Christ is the head of the church. And as Christ ever lives to intercede for the church, you are to intercede for your wife and your family. Pick up her hand and pray with her.

It's just— you have to do it. I know it's not comfortable sometimes, but it is something that needs to happen. And Elkanah should have been doing it right here. Verse 9 says that *“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.”*

By the way, this is our first introduction to the man Eli. And Eli— I have to tell you— I have a soft spot in my heart for Eli. He was basically a good man. He is a likable guy. As I read through these chapters, and I read about Eli, he is the kind of guy I would have liked to call a friend, but he was a horrible father. Pathetic. And here's how. It wasn't that he didn't love his boys. He did— I think he really did— genuinely love them, but he didn't love them to the point where he was willing to correct them.

And most importantly, he didn't love the Word of God, and he didn't honor the position of priest enough to demand that they walk in righteousness. Or basically, you're out of here.

There comes a point where sometimes parents have to do the tough-love thing, and Eli just wasn't willing to do it at all. His sons were evil. They were evil. They were sleeping around. They were corrupt in their ways. They took bribes. They had absolutely no sort of respect for the sacrificial system that they were doing there with the people at Shiloh. It was a pathetic picture.

Remember, this is really the conclusion of that period of the judges where there was this mass apostasy, and where paganism had so infiltrated the people of Israel that they had turned away from the Lord. It was a very dark time to live in the nation of Israel, which, by the way, is another good thing about Elkanah. He was a man who was doing his best, with some—a few— hiccups along the way. He was doing his best to walk in a righteous way. But that's what we are going to find out about Eli as we move on, and we will get to that. But we are told that Hannah went to the doorpost of the temple, and she just dropped to her knees.

And look what it says in verse 10. This is very important. It says: “*She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.*” I want you to notice the wording there. These are key words. “...*deeply distressed,*” very important phrase, “*and wept bitterly.*” Again, very illustrative of what is going on in this woman's heart.

This is the kind of praying that comes from a broken heart. A heart that is just absolutely destroyed. She has been enduring the ridicule and mocking of Peninnah for years. She has desperately wanted a child, and nothing has come from it. And she is a broken woman. Her husband loves her, yes, but there is this hole in her heart.

It's funny. I look at that phrase again in verse 10, “*deeply distressed,*” and I see that this gives us a character sketch of now, the woman Hannah. We have seen a character sketch of Elkanah. Again, pretty good guy. Some hiccups along the

way, but pretty good guy. Trying his best to walk with God. Now we see this picture of Hannah, deeply distressed. And what do we find Hannah doing in her deep distress? We find her falling on her knees and praying, don't we? Here is what I have found as a pastor, not only in my own life, but in the lives of people that I have observed.

I find that they will pray when they are mildly distressed. I find that people are a little less willing to pray when they are moderately distressed. And I find that they are unwilling to pray when they are deeply distressed. That is what I found. It is sort of an interesting deal, isn't it?

We will pray up to a point, but when deep distress comes into our lives, we usually kick prayer to the curb. That is when we start— we either throw up our hands in discouragement and hopelessness, or we take matters into our own hands at that point, usually, when we are deeply distressed. We begin to do our own personal flavor of problem solving.

There is a model, and so I'm showing you this to say, this model that Hannah is giving us is a very godly model. It is a very good model. It is the same model that Jesus gave us. Do you guys remember? The Garden of Gethsemane was arguably as hard on Jesus as was the cross. I mean, to the point where He believed that He would die right there in the garden from the pressure and the difficulty of what He was carrying, to the degree that the Son of Man would cry out to His Father and say, Lord, if there is any way...

Let me paraphrase that. If there is another way, that is what He was saying. If there is another way to get this job done, let's go that way so that this cup might pass from Me. But Luke records a most interesting statement about the suffering of Jesus in the garden. I want to put it on the screen for you. Very simple.

**Luke 22:44 (ESV)**

*And being in agony he prayed more earnestly...*

*And being in agony (the ESV says) he prayed (what) more earnestly...*

See, that is the same example that we're seeing here in Hannah. She was in deep distress, and so she dropped to her knees. Jesus was in agony, and instead of throwing up His hands, or accusing God, and saying, God, I've prayed, and I've prayed, and I've prayed, and You're not listening! I've had it with You! I'm done! I'm done with this Bible church garbage. And I'm going to go my own way and do my own thing. Which has happened.

Instead of that, prayer gets turned up to a fever pitch. Praying more earnestly. That impresses me. I don't know about you, but it impresses me. Because I know my flesh. My flesh is to go the opposite direction.

So here's Hannah. We are at verse 11. It says that *“She vowed a vow (and that was no small thing in Israel. 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 back. I'll give him back to you.) I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.’”*

That is truly an amazing prayer, is it not? For starters, it shows faith, by taking this thing about which she cares so deeply, so passionately, and she lays it at the feet of God in prayer. Again, she is a praying woman. That is the first thing it shows us about Hannah. As I said before, she is a woman of prayer. She could have just cursed God, complained about His motives, rejected Him in exchange for a miserable life of bitterness, but instead she decided to pray.

Secondly, we see that her motives are exposed in this request. She doesn't just ask for a baby. God, I want a baby. I want a child. I want you to notice what she does here. She asks for a baby that she can give to God. She asks for a baby that she can give back to Him. And one of the reasons— and there are some clues in her prayer that help us to understand this a little bit— Hannah recognized that her life— hear me now, Christians, this is really important— Hannah recognized that her life was not hers to simply be happy or for her own enjoyment. She recognized something about her life. She recognized it belonged to God. It was for Him. It was to be lived unto Him.

Here is what you may not see. In this passage, did you notice that three times in this prayer, she calls herself, your servant? What you may not see, depending on the Bible translation you are looking at, is that three times in this prayer, that statement of servant is the word in the Hebrew that is typically used to describe a female household slave.

She is humbling herself before God, and she is recognizing in her attitude of prayer, My life isn't just for me. I want this as much for You. If You would allow me to produce this child, I will produce this child for You, God, because my life is for You. My life— oh, we Christians, God has no problem with you and I being happy. But we Christians, we have taken up the call of the world, haven't we? We talk about happiness like it is the goal of life. I just want to be happy.

It's not about happiness. Happiness comes and goes. God, if You just give me a baby, then I'll be happy. God, if You just give me a better job, I need a raise, then I'll be happy. I need to make more money. God, I need a new house. God, I need a new car, then I'll be happy. Don't You see, God, that I'm not happy. And we complain. As if God is just— His number one goal: for God works all things together for your happiness. It doesn't say that. It says, He works all things together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

We are sitting there waiting; we want happiness. We talk all the time about happiness. And all the while, Jesus says of us, He speaks of us, and He says, Blessed though are those who cry, who mourn now. (Matthew 5:4) It's a blessed thing. Our life is not a real happy thing all the time. We try to do the Disney life, and surround ourselves with Mickey and Minnie and all the sound, and all the worlds, and all the smells. It's like, Let's be happy, and we are going to— and we try to— we bring fantasy and all these things to just make ourselves happy.

I just want to be happy. And if we're not happy enough, I'm going to go to the doctor so I can get some drugs to be happy. And if the doctor doesn't have any drugs for me, I'll take them illegally. It doesn't matter. I'm just going to be happy. The goal is happiness. God says, Blessed are those who mourn. This life is a wrestling match.

It's a race. Paul called it a race. At the end of his life, he said, I ran the race. (2 Timothy 4:7) It wasn't a happy race though. He talked about the race that he lived, that he ran. It was a hard race. Paul said we must go through many trials, right? To enter the kingdom of heaven. (Acts 14:22) We must go through many trials. Many difficulties, many challenges.

But you see, if we get this happiness concept in our mind, then we are going to be really disappointed because God isn't making us happy. Then we are going to be really miffed at Him. Go around and go, I don't know why I want God in my life. He doesn't care about my happiness. I don't know. I just told Him what I wanted, to be happy and He is not answering that prayer.

Like I said, God's not opposed to you necessarily being happy. But the one thing God wants to give you and me is joy. Because joy, you see, knows no circumstances, and He wants to give you and me peace, because peace that He gives is not as the world gives. It is peace that goes beyond our human comprehension. What that means is essentially, we can't even figure out why we are peaceful.

It's funny. It really is funny. Sometimes people will go through really difficult things in the body of Christ. I mean really hard challenges, And we rush to their side to be by them and hold their hand and to be an encouragement to them.

You know what usually happens? It goes the other way. They end up being an encouragement to us. You know why? They're the one going through the problem. They're walking in the grace of God, and they've got peace. And we go there, it's like, we got to go help him. I got to go, I got to go help. I'm going to go be there. I'm going to be an encouragement.

I got to be strong. Oh God, make me strong. Inside I'm just dying. I'm dying to even just go, to sit in this person's presence because of the difficulty. It's like the friends of Job. They just sat for one week and didn't say a word because his suffering was so great. They should have stayed in that posture, by the way. But anyway, it's another Bible study.

The point is, sometimes we feel that way, and we find, though, that often people are walking in such grace for their circumstances that they have peace. I can't tell you how many times as a pastor I have walked away from attempting to minister to someone who is going through a hard time, and I got ministered to. I walked away going, Wow, God, You are so good. Thank You, Lord, that I could experience that, because I really needed that. I walked away just going, Woo! Feeling light! Because that person was experiencing such peace. The joy of the Lord in the midst of their suffering.

People will say sometimes, they'll go, You know what? I just got a call from the hospital, and they gave me the test results, and they weren't good. But I have said, I'm just overwhelmed with peace— something they'll say. Or, my husband left, and he took all the money, but you know, God has just given me a peace to trust in Him. Lost my job, but I'm just really at peace. God— I prayed about it— and God has given me peace. He is going to take care of me.

You see, the circumstances don't bring peace on their own, right? They bring chaos, usually, and panic. The Holy Spirit brings peace and joy. The world is sitting there trying to be happy, and the Christians are just walking in joy. That joy is maintained as we walk in our relationship with God.

So the thing that I want to bring out here is that Hannah isn't treating God like He is there to serve her needs. He is not the big vending machine in the sky, right? And by the way, concerning the baby, notice that Hannah offered him to be a Nazirite. She doesn't use the term Nazirite there, but she says no razor will ever touch his head.

That was part of the Nazirite vow that she is dedicating her child to. It was the same vow that Samson took. Samson didn't keep it. Only thing he kept was the hair part. But, he was not to touch a dead body. He was never to have wine or fermented drink. (Judges 13:1-5) And he broke all the rules.

But that is what she is doing here for her son. And it says that, *“<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.”* I'm sure you have prayed like that before.

*“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.’ (Your Bible may say grief.)*

*“<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.”*

Can I point that out to you please? She prayed. She went there broken-hearted. She got up from her place of prayer. And what changed? Her face was no longer sad. Why? Because she prayed. She prayed till it made a difference. She poured out her heart till it made a difference. How many times have we prayed, and we get up from our place of prayer, and we are just as depressed, just as discouraged, just as burdened.

And all along there is a Savior who says to me, come to Me, all you who are burdened, all you who are heavy laden, I'll take it from you. I'll take it from you. Just come to Me. I'll give you rest. I'm gentle. I'm humble in heart. Come to Me. (Matthew 11:28-30)

We come up from the place of prayer, and we have no rest, and we have no peace. Why? Because we didn't pray till it made a difference. We didn't pray till things changed. And we didn't get up from the place of prayer with faith. And that is the key. Sometimes, you are not going to hear a voice. Sometimes the earth isn't going to quake. You are not going to see a handwriting on the wall or anything like that.

You are just going to pray. You are going to lay it before God. Let me ask you a question. Is your God big enough? Is your God strong enough for your



problems, to take care of the issues that you lay before Him to the point where when you get up from the place of prayer, you feel like you have done something.

I gave this to my Father. I offloaded this burden. I put it on His shoulders. It was killing me. It's not going to kill Him. He can handle it. He bore the sin of the world on His shoulders. He can handle this too. And you get up, and you go, There. Thank you, Lord, the burden is now on You. The proverbial ball is in Your court. I was feeling so burdened like it was my responsibility, it was my thing to fix, but I've put it on Your shoulders, and I'm trusting You.

And Hannah, it says, she got up from the place of prayer, and her face was no longer sad because something dynamic happened when she rose from that place of prayer. She offloaded that burden and gave it to the Lord and came away and was able to breathe again. Sometimes you feel like you can't even breathe, don't you? You have a house on your chest. You can't even— you're scared to— exhale for fear you will never be able to inhale again. Give it to God.

*“<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 (obviously that is a euphemism for physical relations) 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 (that first year) 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.’”*

She hasn't forgotten, God answered her prayer, but she is not second-guessing. She is not waffling— vacillating— on her vow, made a vow to the Lord. I'm going to give him to God, but I'm going to wean him first.

We know that many times they would wait until the child was three years old before the child was fully weaned. And I want you to notice Elkanah's response to Hannah. *“<sup>23</sup> Her husband said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only may the Lord establish his word.’”*

That reflects favorably on Elkanah. Here is why in the law, there was a stipulation that if a man's wife made a rash vow that the husband was not in

agreement about, he could nullify the vow without her experiencing any negative repercussions.

But Elkanah shows by these comments that he was in agreement. He did not overturn her vow, and he was on board with this whole thing. *“So the woman,”* end of verse 23, *“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 (You thought I was drunk. And I was crying out to God). <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.’ And he worshipped the LORD there.”*