

3. Why was it so important to her to have a son? (Did you notice that Elkanah was the 5th generation of a strong family?)

4. We have the introduction to her “sorrow” in verse 2. What was it?

5. What were some of the emotions that Hannah may have been feeling?

6. What about Peninnah? What may she have been feeling?

I read that having these two wives was a “recipe for disaster.” One was barren so she felt worthless, while the other knew she was “second’ in her husband’s heart, so she felt unloved.

7. Have you ever felt worthless because of something you “couldn’t do, didn’t have, or couldn’t provide? Have you ever felt unloved in a relationship, either as a wife, parent, or friend? What emotions or feelings does this story stir in you? What immediate application do you see for yourself?

Meditate on this story during the day. I’m looking forward to tomorrow as we take a deeper look into what’s happening. For now, don’t forget to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to begin speaking to you, revealing truth about Himself, His character, and His heart.

Memory Verse of the Week: “There is none holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.” 1 Samuel 2:2

Second Day

Work on your verse. It's a doozy!

It's important to understand the state of the nation of Israel at the time of Hannah's story. She is much more significant than it appears upon first reading. Israel was transitioning from the period of judges to the rule of the kings. Spiritually, the nation was drifting farther and farther from God. They were indifferent. The priesthood was corrupt, which we'll read about soon. Now enters Hannah, a girl who has a strong faith in God and trusts Him completely. At this point the Holy Spirit has us focus on one woman's plight in life. Some believe she is a grand introduction to the character of Samuel, who was a major leader in Israel's history. Peterson writes, "The story of Hannah is a story in its own right. Hannah is not merely the mother of Samuel, the occasion of a birth story that functions as a kind of entry way to the dominating stories of Samuel, Saul, and David. She holds her own with the best of them. She is as significant, both historically and spiritually, as the three men who follow her in the Samuel narrative." She emerges as a spiritual leader when one was lacking in Israel. I'm sure she passed her theology down to her son. Custis James wrote, "At this perilous moment in Israel's history, God's purposes moved forward through a mother who struggled to understand the God who closed her womb. One wonders what would have become of Israel if not for Hannah."

1. Read 1 Samuel 1: 1-7 again. This yearly visit to the Tabernacle in Shiloh was supposed to be a joyous occasion. They went there to celebrate God's goodness and offer sacrifices. (Deut.12:5-7; 16:16) What made this pilgrimage so difficult for Hannah?

2. Why do you think Peninnah treated Hannah so poorly? Do we see any evidence of retaliation by Hannah? How did she handle this public display of humiliation?

The green-eyed monster of Jealousy took possession of Peninnah, but not Hannah. Hannah was a lily among a bed of thorns. It was no easy task to live with Peninnah.

3. How did Elkanah show his love toward Hannah?

4. In the Hebrew language, the “provoking” that Hannah received from Peninnah was linked to Israel’s enemies who taunted Israel with remarks like “Where is your God now?” It’s thought that her jabs were directed more at God, insinuating that He was playing favorites and He loved her more than He loved Hannah, trying to make her feel that her trust in God was futile.

5. Has anyone ever taunted you by “taunting” the God you love? What did you do? How did you handle it?

6. From our text, who is responsible for closing Hannah’s womb? Why is this significant? Why is that important for you and I to grasp?

7. Have you, or someone you know, been unable to conceive? How did it make you feel? How did God encourage you?

The Lord closed Hannah’s womb, but her heart stayed open to Him. The heart of God was a comforting retreat for a sorrowful soul. Custis James wrote, “Hannah experienced the normal sorrows of empty arms. But her ordeal was intensified – deliberately by Peninnah’s mocking words, and, inadvertently, by Elkanah, who, despite his great devotion to her, no longer shared her struggle. Unwittingly, he contributed to her sufferings. He abandoned her physically by dividing himself between her and Peninnah, he abandoned her emotionally as well. Instead of sharing her sufferings, he addressed the problem of infertility for himself through a second marriage and left Hannah to suffer alone. He was a complicated man. He embraced his culture’s values in his determined quest for a son, yet defied those same values by his love and respect for Hannah even though she failed in her duty to bear children. Out of love, he gave her the double portion of food at the annual feast, which rightfully belonged to Peninnah or her firstborn son.”

8. From the quote above, why do you think the author believes that Elkanah was no longer sharing her struggle? Do you agree with her “take” on Elkanah? Write your thoughts.

9. According to verse 7, what did her grief cause her to do?

10. Although she pushed her food away, does Hannah push God away?

11. When you are so depressed or grieved that you can't eat, do you tend to push God away because of anger, frustration, confusion, etc.? Think about that. What SHOULD be our response?

That's it for today, ladies. If you are suffering and experiencing a difficult time right now, I pray that as we continue the story of Hannah, you will be encouraged to press on and trust the Lord. I'm stopping to pray for you right now.

Third Day

What's your verse?

1. Let's read our story again from 1 Samuel 1:1-18, focusing on verses 8-18. When Elkanah saw Hannah weeping, how did he respond in verse 8? What are your thoughts about that? (Read Ruth 4:15)

2. Describe the scenario in verses 9-16. What motivated Hannah's prayer? How is “her soul” described? What vow did she make?

Hannah must have wondered why God appeared to be so “silent” in her plight. No loud voice calling down from Heaven, no lightning bolt. But God’s apparent silence didn’t discourage her or shake her faith. Instead of turning from Him, she pressed in to Him closer, crying out in prayer. She was barren but believed, her pain driving her to prayer.

3. Is God’s “silence” the way to measure what God is doing behind the scenes? Have you ever felt that God was being “silent”? Did it, or does it, discourage you, or are you able to continue to trust God and His timing?

Hannah’s suffering drove her to God as she fell on her knees before Him in Shiloh, pouring out her heart in prayer. Her heart does not appear full of bitterness or resentment, but of love and reverence. I read this is a powerful sign that God is “active” in Hannah! She aches, she weeps, she prays. Although Hannah may feel that God had abandoned her, she did not abandon Him! Her prayer was one of submission, humility, and a promise of sacrifice.

4. Is there something you are fervently praying for, imploring Him to hear your cries? What can you learn from Hannah so far?
5. If you’re a mom, how did you feel when you read the vow she made with God?
6. Why did Eli the priest think she was drunk? (How is this a further sign of the corruption of the people, if this was “normal” behavior they’d seen around the Temple?)
7. Did Hannah tell Eli what she had prayed for? What did he say?
8. According to verse 18, how did Hannah respond when Eli tells her that her prayer will be granted? Why is this so amazing?

Hannah's whole countenance changed as she chose to believe God's promise. Nothing in her life had changed, but she believed, and found joy in the promise! I wonder if she told Elkanah. I kind of think not. I bet she held it in her heart and pondered it like Mary. What do you think? What would you have done?

9. Do you only believe God when you "see" the answered prayer, or can you trust Him even when the situation doesn't change? What's your first response?

10. Hannah's longing for a baby was very personal, obviously. But it also seemed like her desires focused beyond that, focusing on God and His purposes. She desired a "man for God" and promised to give him back to the Lord. Take a minute and look at your prayers lately. Are they more focused on your own selfish desires or on God's ultimate purposes? **Read James 4:3.** What does it say about this?

11. When you read God's promises in His Word, are you able to have faith, trust Him, and go away joyful, like Hannah, knowing that He is faithful?

Elizabeth George wrote something interesting about Hannah's response to Eli after he accused her of being drunk. She didn't get defensive, respond in anger, or lash out at him. She reacted very graciously, as her name suggests. She compares her to the Proverbs 31 woman as she "opened her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue was the law of kindness" (Proverbs 31:26) How often when we have a "sorrowful spirit" or are upset by something, do we lash out and lose our filters? (I know I do!)

12. Read the following verses and explain what they say about our speech:
 - a. Proverbs 15:28
 - b. Proverbs 15:1
 - c. Proverbs 16:21
 - d. Proverbs 16:23
 - e. Proverbs 10:19

See ya tomorrow!!!

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse? Is God your Rock?

1. Read 1 Samuel 1:19-28. Hannah gets pregnant and has her boy! How exciting! She named him Samuel which means "Asked of God." (Interesting we don't hear anymore from Peninnah!) What decision did she make about going to the yearly sacrifice with her hubby? Does he argue with her?

2. I find it really interesting that Elkanah showed such a great amount of respect for Hannah when he didn't overrule her commitment, which was his legal right as her husband (Numbers 30:10-15). He also was with her when they finally did bring him to offer sacrifices and present him to Eli. What does that tell us about him?

3. Do you think Hannah had second thoughts at all about presenting him to Eli? Would you?

As a mom, I really don't know if I could have done this. After all the years of praying for a child, now to hand him over to be raised in the Temple, a corrupt one at that? She willingly gave up her greatest treasure, sacrificing for God. Again, she exhibits an amazing amount of faith, commitment to her word, trust in her God, and an incomparable strength of character. This shows us that her greatest concern was for God's glory. I'm sure she took those 3-4 years to teach Samuel about God and prepare him any way she could to serve the Lord. (Proverbs 22:6, Deuteronomy 6:7,13) Warren Wiersbe said of Samuel, "He was both an answer to prayer and a great man of prayer." I'm sure his mom had a lot to do with that! 😊 Let's be careful not to think this was easy for Hannah. I know she felt the pain of the sacrifice, she had to. She was human, just like us.

4. If you're a mom, are you training your children in God's ways? Are you loving the Lord with all your heart so they see how to do it? Are you remembering the Lord in all things and worshipping Him, pointing your kids to Jesus? Are you following God's guidelines in His Word for parenting? Is this your first priority?

5. Are you diligent to pray for your kids, or your friends' kids, or neighbor kids?

There's a great book on prayer called, Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy With God by Timothy Keller. It's not just another book on prayer, it's a great one! (Phillip Yancey has a great one on prayer too!) I wanted to share a few quotes from it on the topic of prayer:

"Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle -- yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer, or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer."

"Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change – the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things He has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to."

6. I think we learned the truths Keller was talking about from Hannah, don't you? Take some time and evaluate your prayer life. Is it self-seeking or God-seeking? Is it self-honoring or God-honoring? Do you include praise, worship, and thanksgiving, or only supplication?
7. Hannah "lent" Samuel to the Lord. She gave God her most precious, costly gift, her only son. Is God calling you to give something back to Him, something that is a sacrifice to you? Perhaps your children, in the sense of trusting God with them, their futures, and their lives? Perhaps its money, and He's asking you to be generous and maybe let go of some of it? Maybe it's your hobbies that take more time than they should? Or what about your time? Do you waste it, or only spend it on yourself? Hmmm ... a lot to think about. Thanks Hannah!

6. Was Hannah praying for the nation or for herself personally?

7. Hannah begins her prayer by looking at the greatness of God. Why is that such a healthy way to begin your prayer time?

I love what Warren Wiersbe said: "Praise helps us focus on the glory of the Lord and not on the greatness of our needs. When we see the greatness of God, we start to see life with the right perspective."

8. Lately, have you been focusing on the greatness of God or the greatness of your problems? Spend some time reflecting ...

9. How is God like a rock? Can you find other verses that describe Him as that as well?

10. Read Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. How are they similar?

11. What is the most important lesson you learned from Hannah?

12. What is the most “inspiring” thing you learned?

13. Is there anything God has called you to change as a result?

14. A few more points before we end. Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21. Did Hannah ever get to see Samuel again?

15. How did God bless Hannah and Elkanah in verse 21?

Hannah’s son, Samuel, became a great man of prayer and intercession, his name being present in Hebrew 11, the list of heroes of faith. (Hebrews 11:32)

Oh, the influence of a Godly, praying mom!

So nice to end on a happy note, right? I love happy endings! See you next week!

