1/12/2020 - Lesson: Book of 1 Samuel - Chapter 1:1-2:11 -

 Title: **“God Hears” Hannah’s Powerful Prayer**

**Key Verse: 1:10-11**

***10In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 11And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used***

***on his head.***

**PART I – HISTORY’S CONTEXT**

In the Old Testament, the books of 1st-2nd Samuel, 1st-2nd Kings and 1st-2nd Chronicles mark a new era for Israel. These are books of **transition** that last around 575 years: from a period of God’s presence and guidance, to a period of God’s silence and absence. This is the history of Israel’s transition, coming from a **theocracy**, going into **anarchy** and consequently arriving to a **monarchy**. Transition because it starts off from divine intervention and diminishes towards man’s slumber and sin. These books begin around 1100 BC and stretch till the return from the Babylonian captivity, which covers the history to the end of the Old Testament. Then, it is followed by 400 years of silence until God speaks again in the New Testament. The book of Samuel lasts about a century, narrating the hardship and the influence of four main leaders. Eli the priest, Samuel the prophet, Saul the politician and David the pastor/poet. Samuel was born during this declining period of Judges, where the theocratic system was dissolving into corruption. Israel was experiencing chaos and anarchy. It was messy, unruly and God’s glory was gone. Lands around Israel, were ruled by monarchies. **Judges 21:25** says that: “ in those days, Israel had no King: every one did as they saw fit”. Samuel is connected between the period of Judges and the era of Kings. Paradoxically, Samuel is the last judge of Israel and the first prophet. Like Samson as a judge and like John the Baptist as a prophet, Samuel links these two symbolic periods. Interestingly, these three were similarly dedicated to the Lord [as we will see later].

**PART II - HANNAH’S AFFLICTION**

The very beginning of the Book of Samuel starts off with a **very exceptional woman**. The first chapter of 1 Samuel is entirely about **Hannah**. God uses women for exceptional situations. Women play a very significant role in faith and the upbringing of strong holy men in service to God. He gives women the natural essence of nurturing their offspring. A mother’s love is often the finest standard that can emulate God’s love on earth. Jochebed, Moses’ mother, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Hannah, Elizabeth and Mary are all exceptional women who overcame incredible obstacles of motherhood. God reserved them for very important purposes. In verses 2 to 7, we see the circumstance and difficulties that Hannah was living in. **1 Samuel 1:4 – 7 please read**: Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters.**5**But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. **6**Because the Lord had closed Hannah’s womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. **7**This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

**Imagine the affliction of Hannah.** Hannah’s family was very complicated. She was the first wife of Elkanah, she was infertile, she could not give birth. Peninnah was a second wife and she had many children. Peninnah would complement the family’s fruitful linage. Not Hannah. Though, she was very loved by her husband, and abundantly rewarded - Hannah was miserable because she couldn’t rear children. Not only did she feel incomplete, but Peninnah would provoke and insult her. There was deep jealousy between these two women. Peninnah knew Elkanah loved Hannah more. And in rivalry, Peninnah bore him more children – using them to tease and taunt Hannah. Peninnah was an agitator, constantly humiliating and ridiculing Hannah for her infertility. Fundamentally – Peninnah criticized and condemned Hannah.

In those days women who stayed single or couldn’t rear children were branded as worthless or cursed. A woman’s value depended on their family size, and a man’s power was measured in their virility. There are similar stereotypes today, women are stigmatized as unfulfilled or incomplete. **Verse 5** says: the Lord had closed her womb. This implied that God had a purpose in preserving Hannah childless. Hannah had an exceptional challenge in her life that only God would resolve. Though Hannah had a deep hurt in her soul, she would not give into retribution. Hannah would not despair nor reproach others. Instead of acting despiteful, she would take in the insults. Does this sound familiar to anyone? We all have difficult situations with family members. Some make us feel inferior and with deep insecurities. An aunt, or cousin, older brother, or stepparent is constantly criticizing you. They have a “Peninnah-like attitude”. They compare/mock themselves to others who may or may not be married, may or may not have children. There could be a superiority complex, or lust towards someone else’s personal condition. “Peninnah-like attitude” person acts as a “morality police” – a questioning, criticizing and judging your life. But, in these circumstances, you can’t fight them back. You cannot fight fire with fire. And like Hannah, we have to be still in God. Although we cannot keep others from unjustly criticizing us, we can choose how we will react to their hurtful words. Rather than dwelling upon our problems, we can enjoy the loving relationships God has given us. By doing so, we can exchange self-pity for hope. Hannah does not fight back but reaches out to the most peaceful weapon against adversity. Prayer. Hannah pours her anguish and grief from her broken heart onto a prayer. Her prayer’s petition was so powerful, that God heard it. **Please read** **Verses 10 to 13**: In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 11And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head. 12As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. 13Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk

**PART III - HANNAH’S PRAYER**

Hannah had great pain deep in her heart and this hurt was poured onto a transcendental plea. She was weeping bitterly, setting a covenant with God. This prayer was a determination to surrender completely and obey unconditionally. Hannah desperately wanted a child and was willing to strike a bargain with God. Wanting a child was not just for a personal desire to nurture – it was a desire to bless God through this child’s life, and even be a blessing to others. This prayer was filled with truth and conviction. She brought her problem honestly before God. She prayed right, with faith and hope in God. Hannah instead of retaliating or giving up hope, she prayed. Each of us may face times of barrenness when nothing comes to fruition in our work, service, or relationships. It is difficult to pray in faith when we feel so ineffective and disoriented. But, as Hannah discovered, prayer opened the way for God to work.

**Verse 15, 16** reads: I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. 16Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief. Eli blesses her in **verse 17**: Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.EvenEli the priest misjudged her as a drunk. Eli looked at her face - not her heart. But once he understood Hannah’s circumstance, he blessed her. Sometimes others criticize us by just our appearance, without really knowing where we have come from. Perhaps our way of worship or praise is criticized. And like Eli, make a misguided judgment call on our morality and even our salvation. We can criticize others, and in doing so, become hypocritical. But Hannah responded humbly. Hannah’s heart was after God - these following verses are exactly what she experienced. **Please read** **1 Jn. 5:14-15** says: **14**This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. **15**And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. **PS 34:17 – 19** says: The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.**18**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**19**The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all. Hannah was no longer downcast because she honestly prayed to God. She received encouragement from Eli and was resolved to leave the problem with God. Her prayer was from the heart and it was redemptive. “So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the Lord for him”. [Verses 20]Hannah namedSamuel which means, “God Hears” – calling his name was a constant reminder that her prayer was answered.

**Please Read Verse 23** reads: Do what seems best to you,” her husband Elkanah told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7236d)] word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. This basically means, until baby Samuel became a toddler. Elkanah respected, listened and supported Hannah’s decision to keep little Samuel at home. Elkanah understood the difficulty of this decision by Hannah. For both, Samuel was their first and only son – not seeing him everyday would be a very difficult thing to do. Although Elkanah could not solve Hannah’s problems, he didn’t give up on loving her. He could have divorced Hannah but remained lovingly devoted to her, despite social and civil criticism.

As men, we need to be supportive and respectful of our wives. As men, we need to be humble and acknowledge their pain and needs. My wife took care of Sara while she was born and took care of me while I had a stroke – my wife is very strong. Thank God for the grace of Jesus upon our family. Our marriage relationship is constant work and prayer; without Jesus at our center it would not be functional. And like Hannah and Elkanah, we should be confident of God’s ultimate control over the events in our lives. We ought to be thankful for the ways God has blessed us. It’s important to acknowledge what we have and not focus or strain over what we lack. By praising God for all good gifts, we acknowledge that God has the ultimate control over all our life. God always provides. In His time and not ours for He knows best how much we can handle. As a church congregation, we are like a bride to Jesus. We are all struggling with God’s timing in answering our prayers. Together as a fellowship, we need to share our burdens with one another so that through prayer and love in Jesus, we can heal. The Holy Spirit of Jesus can alleviate our pain. By supporting those who are struggling, we help them in remaining in their faith and confident in his timing to bring fulfillment to their lives.

**PART IV - HANNAH’S DEDICATES SAMUEL TO THE LORD**

**Please Read Verse 26 to 28** reads: Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. 27I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. 28So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there. Although Hannah’s circumstances were very challenging, she boldly invested her heart in her family. Her faith persevered. Her number one priority was for Samuel to have a spiritual emphasis. She demonstrates resilience, wisdom and loyalty. Her faith was very personal and practical – she made her family the missionary harvest. Hannah knew Samuel was a direct answer from God. She kept her vow and made sure to follow up on her promise to God. Hannah gave up what she wanted the most, her son, and presented him to Eli to serve his lifetime in the house of the Lord. In doing this, Hannah was dedicating her son as well as her entire life and future to God. Hannah knew that Samuel’s life was from God and that she was not giving him up. Rather, she was returning him to God who had given Samuel to her in the first place. This is why baby dedications are so meaningful. We acknowledge that children are loaned onto us so that we can nurture in them the mercy the Lord has freely granted us. This is so that they may return to God’s heavenly kingdom fully clothed in holiness for the glory of God. [Isaiah 61:10] Parents, sons, and daughters have to be a living sacrifice onto God through the mercy of Jesus Christ.

The world does not guarantee us a good future. This is enforced in Matthew 6:19-21: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20**But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Hannah said, “Now I give him to the Lord.” This is so meaningful because our insurance is in Jesus and His heavenly kingdom. God’s word last forever! What we have belongs to the Lord. As a dad, I see how important it is to deepen my relationship with God. To pray for myself to be a godly father and husband so that Jesus can be revealed to my daughter and wife. Being Christ-Centered is crucial!

Hannah knew this. She was a wise investor. Her retirement plan was Samuel deposited in God’s Bank of Glory. This makes me wonder, how is my spiritual investment portfolio looking like? Is my dedication to God minimal or is it sacrificial?

**PART V – WORSHIP THE LORD**

Verses 1 to 10 in Chapter 2 of 1 Samuel, is about Hannah’s Thankful Prayer to the Lord. In summary these reads: My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my hornis lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. “It is not by strength that one prevails; “He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” Hannah is worshiping God for the miracle of giving her a son. The theme of her poetic prayer is her confidence in God’s sovereignty. She expresses how even though her struggles were many; God was there to save her from all the adversity. Even when things are tough for us to endure, we have to be thankful to God for His sovereignty and mercy. **16**Rejoice always, **17**pray continually, **18**give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18]

Sometimes it is easy to fall into discouragement because our lives don’t meet the expectations society, or we have for ourselves. Sometimes discouragement comes because we don’t have a spouse, or we don’t have the right job, or we don’t have a big enough house, or we don’t have a child, or want more children, or our kids don’t listen, or are unhealthy. The language of discouragement deals with the “I don’t have…”. In my case, after I suffered a stroke, I couldn’t multitask very well. Although physically I look fine, my mind and cognitive abilities are not optimal like they were before. But thank Jesus for His grace and mercy because God is showing me to work with what I have been given. To be thankful in all circumstances and to dedicate what I have to the Lord. In His mercy to me, God provided a part-time job working in the arts and at the same time giving me flexible hours to be able to parent Sara. God is so amazing and works things out for our good always.

 Our value to God is not based on our ability to physically produce. God has a purpose for us though we might not see it yet; God is preparing us at this very moment. God is molding us so that we can be a blessing and be a spiritual influence to others. Let’s read our key verse again, 10In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 11And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

Through this passage, I see how important it is to petition to God. God always hears and surely provides. Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. [Mark 11:24] Like we need food and water, we have to pray everyday. Prayer is our direct connection to God in Jesus. Prayer is a weapon against evil. Prayer is redemptive. Prayer lifts us up in joy and deliverance. God is waiting for that call. Like Hannah, let’s come to God wholeheartedly everyday in prayer – God DOES hear us.

**Lets Pray.**