

Trouble, Trust, and Triumph: Facing our troubles, trusting in God’s sovereignty, and rejoicing in our triumphs

Learning from Hannah

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Lesson 1 – Hannah's Suffering

Opening Questions

1. What are some benefits of having a child or children for a family?
2. What is the meaning of your name?

Introduction

In this broken world, no one is immune from suffering. For women, inability to conceive a baby can be very frustrating. We will read a story about Hannah, who was probably Elkanah's first wife. When Hannah remained unable to conceive, Elkanah married Peninnah for the family's future survival. Polygamy was accepted in ancient Israel's male-controlled society (patriarchal), especially when the first wife could not produce children. God allowed but did not approve of this. God designed marriage between a man and a woman. Polygamy often created family problems, though it might provide protection and security for women who could not provide for themselves. In most cultures today, women can provide for and protect themselves.



To think about:

Male-controlled society is one of the results of humanity's sin and rebellion against God. In a male-controlled society, women often do not have as equal benefits as men. One day, when Jesus returns, he will complete the work of his kingdom and establish a society in the renewed world (heaven on earth), where there will be no sin but righteousness and holiness for all his people.

From the Bible: Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20



Discussion Questions

1. What kind of suffering did Hannah experience (v.1-2)?
2. What can we know about Elkanah (v.1-3)?
3. Why did Elkanah give Hannah a double portion of his sacrifice (v.4-5)?
4. What did Elkanah's other wife use to do to Hannah? How would Hannah feel (v.6)?
5. The annual sacrifice is a special and joyful act of worship. Why was Hannah emotionally distressed instead of being joyful (v.7)?
6. What did Hannah do in the temple (v.10)? What vow did she make to God (v.11)?
7. What did Eli the priest think that Hannah was doing (v.12-14)? What did Hannah say to him (v.15-16)?
8. How did Eli respond to her (v.17)? What did Hannah do after praying to God (v.18)?
9. How did God bless Hannah (v.19-20)? What name did she give to her son? Why (v.20)?
10. God's answer to our prayers may be: (a) "Yes," (b) "No," or (c) "Wait." How should we respond to each of these answers? How does Hannah's story encourage you?



Closing Points

1. Hannah faced her trouble with prayer, and as a result her faith in God was strengthened. Her trouble brought her closer to God. She ran *to* him rather than ran away from him. Her prayer to God changed her. She was depressed and could not eat, but after praying, her appetite returned, and she was no longer sad.
2. When we face our troubles, we can learn from Hannah, running to God with prayers and trusting him with faith. God is sovereign. As our good heavenly Father, he takes care of and watches over all his children in this broken world. God does not promise that we will be free from suffering but promises to be with us in our suffering.

Notes

Sovereign: having supreme power.
Sovereignty: supreme power or authority.
God is sovereign and in control over all things.

Sin: thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God. Sin is also a powerful evil force.

1 Samuel 1:1-20

The Birth of Samuel

¹ There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. ² He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³ 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, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. ⁴ On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. ⁶ And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. ⁷ So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. ⁸ And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. ¹¹ 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."

¹² As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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."

Notes

Portions: for thank-offerings to God, some parts of the animals are for the sacrificers or worshippers, some parts are to be given to the priests for their food, and some parts are to be completely burned for God. The worshippers are to eat before God, having communion with him, by partaking with him of his sacrifices, which had been offered to him at his altar.

Notes

The Lord of hosts: the Almighty God. The phrase emphasizes God's absolute power, sovereignty, and involvement in creation.

Provoke: to annoy and incite anger.

The Lord had closed her womb: God prevented Hannah from having children for a special purpose.

No razor shall touch his head: Hannah makes a vow to make her child a *Nazarite*—a person dedicated to the service of God—who will not cut his hair.

Vexation: frustration.

The Lord remembered: a recurring concept in the Bible, indicating God's divine action to bless his people in time of waiting or suffering. This phrase emphasizes the importance of our prayers and God's sovereign grace and acts.

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Lesson 2 – Hannah's Joy

Opening Questions

1. When do you sing or hum alone?
2. What is one thing about God that you have learned in your personal life experience?

Introduction

In lesson 1, we have learned that Hannah was barren and mocked by her husband's other wife. She was depressed and frustrated, but she ran to God instead of running away from him. She prayed sincerely, asking God for help, and God answered her by enabling her to conceive. She named her son Samuel which means "I have asked for him from the Lord." She dedicated Samuel to the service of God. Samuel would later become a great prophet.



To think about:

In this broken world, God often lets his people face troubles and suffering. God uses our troubles and suffering to help strengthen our faith in him and to see his sovereignty over all things. Charles Spurgeon, a famous pastor and theologian, said, "God is too good to be unkind and is too wise to be mistaken. When we cannot trace his hand, we must trust his heart."

From the Bible: Read 1 Samuel 1:21 – 2:11



Discussion Questions

1. What did Elkanah and his household do annually? What was special about that particular year after Samuel was born (1:21)?
2. Why did Hannah not go with her husband to the house of God (v.22)? How did Elkanah respond to her (v.23)?
3. What did Hannah bring to God for her sacrifice after she had weaned her son (v.24)?
4. To whom did Hannah give her son (v.25)? What did Hannah say to him (v.26-28)?
5. In Hannah's prayer, what did she say about herself and about God (2:1-3)?
6. Hannah used contrasts in her song and prayer. What are the contrasts? What did Hannah say about the sovereignty of God over all people (v.4-8)?
7. What did Hannah say about the judgment of God (v.9-10)?
8. Israel did not have kings but ruled by judges or spiritual leaders. Priest Eli was the judge and leader of Israel at that time. Who, then, is the king or *God's anointed* person that Hannah spoke about (v.10)?
9. Hannah would not raise her son and experience motherhood. She gave him up for the service of God. This was her true sacrifice (v.11). What do you think about this?



Closing Points

1. Hannah's worldview is shaped by her faith in God and expectation of God's help for his people. Is our worldview like Hannah's? Hannah trusted God when facing suffering. Furthermore, Hannah did not ask God to give her a son for herself but for God himself. God blessed Hannah and would make Hannah's son become a great prophet who would anoint the first king of Israel and the famous King David.
2. In the text, we see for the first time the phrase "God's anointed" is mentioned in the Old Testament. Hannah's prayer is prophetic. Though she spoke of a great king that God would give to Israel, it is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus, whom God gave to all his people in all nations. Jesus' title is *the Anointed One*. He is *the Promised Messiah, the Savior, and the true King* for all God's people.

Notes

Sovereign: having supreme power.
Sovereignty: supreme power or authority.
God is sovereign and in control over all things.

Hum: to make a low, continuous, and resonant sound with the mouth closed.

Barren: to be unproductive; infertile.

Prophet: a messenger of God proclaiming the will of God.

Prophetic: describing or predicting what will happen in the future.

1 Samuel 1:21-28

Samuel Given to the Lord

²¹ The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. ²² 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.” ²³ 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.

²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. ²⁸ Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.

1 Samuel 2:1-11

Hannah's Prayer

¹ And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.

² “There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

³ Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.

⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.

⁶ The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷ The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

⁸ He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world.

⁹ “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.

¹⁰ The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

¹¹ Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest.

Notes

Anoint: to rub with oil.

In ancient Israel, a king was anointed and was called “the anointed one.”

Minister: to serve.

Notes

Yearly sacrifice: an annual thank-offering or peace-offering.

Vow: a pledge or a promise.

Both Hannah and Elkanah had agreed and made a vow to dedicate their son to the service of God.

Wean: the process of transitioning a baby from its mother's milk to solid food.

Bull: an adult male animal like a cow.

Ephah: an ancient measurement equal to 35 liters.

Lend: to give.

Hannah's prayer: she sang her prayer to God. It takes the form of a poem with figurative language.

Exult: to rejoice.

Horn: a metaphor of *strength*.

Exalt: to lift high.

Deride: to put down or ridicule.

Feeble: weak.

Cease: to stop.

Forlorn: to abandon.

Sheol: grave.

Might: strength.

Prevail: to succeed

Adversary: enemy.

Resources

Duguid, Ian M., James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, eds. 1 Samuel – 2 Chronicles, ESV Commentary, vol. 3. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.

Serendipity Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.