Hannah: A Model for Motherhood

1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

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Video: “Moms: Portrait of God”

Proverbs 31:30 declares, ***“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”*** Proverbs 31:28 adds, ***“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”***

We want to bless every woman here today, whether you are a mom or not. If you’re a woman we’d like you to stay seated while the rest of us rise and bless you. Let’s applaud the value and dignity of all women right now!

Moms teach us so many things, don’t they?

* My mother taught me MEDICINE: *“If you don’t stop crossing your eyes, they’re going to stay that way.”*
* My mom taught me about GENETICS: *“You are just like your father!”*
* My mother taught me about my ROOTS: *“Were you born in a barn?”*
* My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: *“Just wait until your father gets home!”*
* She also taught me RELIGION: *“You better pray that will come out of the carpet.”*
* And the #1 thing my mother taught me was JUSTICE: *“One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!”*

Actually, I’ve been blessed because our daughters have turned out to be more like their mom…and that’s a good thing!

The American incarnation of Mother’s Day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. Interestingly, Jarvis would later denounce the holiday’s commercialization and spent the latter part of her life trying to remove it from the calendar.

While I’m not in favor of removing Mother’s Day from the month of May, there sure is a lot of commercialization surrounding it. While we will magnify motherhood today, I recognize that this day is not happy for everyone.

* Some of you probably didn’t want to come to church today because your mother is no longer alive and you really miss her.
* Others of you don’t care much for your mom and you’re a bit turned off by all the syrupy sentiments in Hallmark cards.
* Some of you may have a mother who is very sick right now and you wonder how much longer she’s going to be with you.
* Perhaps you’re parenting solo as you work hard to nurture the faith of your children.
* A handful of you have experienced the devastating loss of a child’s death.
* Others of you have a broken heart because your child has gone prodigal or is not saved (yet).
* There are probably some mothers here this morning that wish they didn’t have kids and I know there are women here who would give anything just to have a child.
* Some of you are in a blended family and things just feel messy on Mother’s Day.
* There are also moms here who feel like they’ve failed and struggle with all the #supermoms and #bestmomever posts.

As a way to recognize the pain and loss that some are feeling today, we’ve put some roses up here on the platform to help you know that God loves you and so do we. Let me also say that womanhood is not only about marriage and children. Your worth as a woman goes far beyond your marital status or whether or not you have kids.

In our passage for today we’re going to learn about a woman with a lot of woes. In the midst of Hannah’s hurts, God ministered His grace and mercy to her. Here’s what we can learn from her: *Until we fully surrender, we won’t fully serve the Savior.*

Before we jump into her story, turn to the very last verse of the Book of Judges. In our English Bibles, the Book of Ruth comes after Judges, but in the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel follows immediately after Judges. The situation is bleak, much like our society today. The nation of Israel is torn apart by a lack of leadership and a pervasive perversity. According to Judges 21:25, ***“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”***

The nation of Israel was often oppressed by the surrounding nations. God would appoint a judge to lead His people, but their freedom generally lasted only as long as the judge was alive. On top of that, many of the judges, like Samson, had some fatal flaws. When we come to 1 Samuel, we’re introduced to Hannah, who became the mother of the prophet who would end up annointing Israel’s first two kings. Indeed, mothers matter because their prayers can change the course of a nation. That reminds me of what Abraham Lincoln said about his mom: *“I remember my mother’s prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life.”*

As we look at the first two chapters of 1 Samuel, we’ll see **5 Defining Traits of a Woman of Faith.** If you’re following along in the pew Bible, our text begins on page 287. The first one may surprise you.

**1. Women of faith exhibit real problems** (1:1-8). It’s easy to think that the heroes in the Bible were somehow different than we are and that it’s tough to relate to them because their lives were so perfect. Actually, the Bible is filled with real people with real problems, who face them with real faith.

We’re introduced to a man named Elkanah. Verse 2 tells us that ***“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.”***  The wife’s chief role in those days was to provide children. A barren womb was considered a curse and Hannah would have been looked down upon. She was spiritually disturbed, socially disgraced, and emotionally depressed. Because she was barren her husband married another woman so he could have children.

Verse 3 tells us that Elkanah and his two wives made a yearly visit to Shiloh, about a twenty-mile journey, to worship the Lord. This shows us something about his **devout spirituality**. When the whole culture was headed south spiritually, Elkanah swam against the tide of apathy, and made sure his family gathered with God’s family for corporate worship. He could have said, *“No one else is going, it’s too far to travel, the service is too early, and I don’t like the ministers anyway.”*

Verses 4-5 show us something about his **devoted heart**. He gave portions of the sacrificial meat to Penninah and her children, ***“But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her…”*** This sacrifice was a thank offering, which allowed the worshipers to eat the part that was not offered to God. This ***“double”*** portion literally means, *“to show the face”* and indicated a “select portion,” like prime rib. He showed his face to her, indicating that she was worthy and that he cared deeply for her. She was barren, but beloved. It had to be difficult for Hannah to eat the food that was associated with the “thank offering,” when she probably wasn’t all that thankful. Having a husband who expressed his love probably helped a lot.

He was devout in his walk with God and devoted to Hannah, but he had a **divided family**. The original cause of this division was Elkanah’s decision to marry two wives, which was not God’s original intent for marriage. It’s likely that Elkanah had married Hannah first and then, because she was not able to have children, he decided to marry Penninah. Though the Bible records the polygamous relationships of some of the patriarchs, it never endorses it. Contrary to what our culture now says, marriage is a covenant commitment between one man and one wife for life. Someone has said that the penalty for bigamy is having two mothers-in-law!

Even though these two wives did not get along, the most difficult thing that Hannah faced is the phrase that is repeated twice, once at the end of verse 5 and again at the beginning of verse 6: ***“And the Lord had closed her womb.”*** The problem that she was having came from the Lord. This is one of the hardest lessons we will ever learn. Our problems are given to us by the Lord Himself. It is God who is behind the circumstances of life. We don’t really want to believe this. We’d rather blame it all on Satan, or on someone else. Hannah had to settle the sovereignty issue – He’s God and she’s not. I like how one pastor puts it: *“In every situation, God is always doing a thousand different things that you cannot see and did not know.”*

Verse 6 describes the character and personality of Penninah: ***“…And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her.”*** She couldn’t just be thankful that she had children but felt the need to needle and harass Hannah. The word ***“provoke”*** literally means, *“to cause her thunder.”*  She’s trying to get Hannah to blow her top! The word ***“irritate”***refers to being stirred up inwardly. It bothered Hannah so much that she would weep and not be able to eat. This word means that she mourned deeply with so much grief that she lost her appetite. Some of you are in the middle of this kind of anguish right now.

In verse 8, Elkanah tries his best to comfort his wife: ***“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?”*** While it’s significant that a husband would even notice a wife’s sadness and want to find out why she’s crying, I wonder if his attempt at empathy was appreciated.

He’s basically saying, *“You’ve got me, babe (or at least part of me), what more could you want?”* I’m not sure he really understood how deeply she wanted to have a child because having children was the way for a woman to have honor in that culture. After all, it’s possible to love one’s husband and still want to have children. Some of you have been hit with some insensitive comments, either by your husband, or from others. God understands your pain.

**2. Women of faith express vibrant prayers** (1:9-18). Hannah had some problems but she didn’t shut down, lash out at those around her or develop bitterness against God. She expressed her faith through prayer. God uses our problems to get our attention and to teach us according to Psalm 119:71: ***“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your decrees.”***

I loved being part of two different groups that met for prayer on Thursday’s National Day of Prayer. The first group was at the Quad Cities Prayer Center early in the morning and then a number of us met at noon at the Rock Island Courthouse to pray for our nation, repentance, upcoming elections, our government leaders, local churches, pastors, persecuted Christians, teachers, students, marriages and families, law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, city workers and our military. The theme for the day was, “Wake Up America!”

Our problems should drive us to prayer. Look at verses 10-11: ***“She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. 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.’”***

Her weeping led to worship as her tears mingled with her prayers. The kind of prayer that arises from the bitterness of the soul is far different than the dry prayers that I sometimes utter. When tears are in our eyes, our prayer comes from the heart. Alan Redpath has said, *“When God has an impossible task, he takes an impossible person and crushes him or her.”* Chuck Swindoll adds, *“This is how God often deals with strong willed and stubborn people.”*

Hannah is definitely broken. The description of God as ***“The Lord of Hosts”*** refers to all the armies of heaven. Hannah uses God’s covenant name more than any other woman in the Bible and she is the only woman in the Old Testament to make and keep a vow. The Lord Almighty has all the hosts of heaven ready to do His work. She is appealing to His power and authority, because she knows there is nothing she can do.

As part of her prayer, she is making a vow that if she’s given a son, he will be dedicated to the Lord for his entire life. Having worked through years of barrenness, and the problems that this caused, Hannah now realizes a very important truth:Our children are on loan from the Lord and it’s our job to parent, to shepherd, and to train them for the Lord’s work.

It’s significant that verse 12 says, ***“As she continued praying before the Lord.”*** This wasn’t just a quick popcorn prayer. This was a repeated request, bathed in tears. Notice also that she prayed this prayer in her heart, not audibly like most Hebrews prayed. Her quiet prayer had an unfortunate consequence when Eli, the priest, accused her of being drunk. That says a lot about the culture at that time – there were probably drunken people around the temple and Eli thought she was one of them. Some of you can relate to being misunderstood and having your motives questioned. It doesn’t feel good, does it?

When she had the opportunity to explain herself, Eli answered in verse 17: ***“Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.”*** This benediction was a huge blessing to Hannah. He didn’t know what she was praying about, but as high priest, he gave his “amen” to her request. Her whole countenance changed in verse 18 when we read ***“…Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.”*** This is really cool. After spending time in prayer, her face was no longer sad. She had left her concerns with the Lord and now she’s experiencing the ***“peace that passes all understanding.”*** Friend, when you’ve wrestled with God in prayer, and met with Him, that alone is enough!

*Until we fully surrender, we won’t fully serve the Savior.*

A woman of faith exhibits real problems and expresses vibrant prayers. That leads to a third defining trait…

**3. Women of faith experience God’s provision** (1:19-20). Verse 19 tells us that once again they got up early the next morning and worshipped before the Lord ***“and the Lord remembered her.”*** Then they went back home. A short time later, Hannah conceived and give birth to a son, naming him Samuel. His name sounds like the Hebrew for *“heard of God.”* Every time she said his name she was reminded of his origin and destiny.

I’m delighted that Edgewood is once again participating in the Baby Bottle Project for Pregnancy Resources as a way to stand up for life in the QCA. You can pick up your bottle today and bring it back on Father’s Day. We’ve already filled up two in our family. Speaking of life, did you hear the recent news about a remarkable discovery made by researchers from Northwestern University? Let me quote from an article in the Telegraph: *“Human life begins in a bright flash of light as a sperm meets an egg, scientists have shown for the first time, after capturing the astonishing ‘fireworks’ on film. An explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception.”* The Bible teaches that life begins at conception – I love it when science catches up with what we already know is true!

Let’s be careful here. Just because Hannah’s prayers for a son were answered, that doesn’t necessarily mean that you will be given a child because you prayed for one. But you will receive God’s provision, one way or another. He loves to give good gifts to His children according to Matthew 7:11***: “…how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”***

God allowed a time of barrenness in Hannah’s life to bring a greater blessing than she could ever imagine. But God was doing an even bigger thing in her life as He brought her to the realization: *Until she fully surrendered, she wouldn’t fully serve the Savior.*

**4. Women of faith excel at keeping their promises** (1:21-28). After Samuel was born, Elkanah went again to Shiloh in order to worship. Hannah decided to not go until Samuel was weaned, which would have been at around three-years-old. **She dedicated herself to her child,** nursing and nurturing him, knowing that when he is able to eat on his own, she ***“…will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever.”*** Many people make promises to God, only to forget them once time passes. Not so with Hannah. She fully intended to keep her promise because she knew that Samuel did not really belong to her anyway.

Hannah not only dedicated herself to her child, she **dedicated her child to the Lord.** She then brings Samuel to the house of the Lord and says in verse 28: ***“Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.”*** She repeated this twice as if to cement her commitment, knowing that she will never revoke it.I listened to a talk by Janet Parshall on Hannah this week and she said something I would never have thought of as a man: *“Every time she felt Samuel kicking in her stomach, every time he moved right under her heart, every jab in her ribs, she was reminded to say, ‘Yes, Lord, he is yours. Yes, Lord, he is yours.’”*

Verse 28 ends with a glimpse into young Samuel’s heart: ***“And he worshiped the LORD there.”*** Even at three-years-old, he was able to worship.

It’s one thing to say that our children are dedicated to the Lord; it’s another thing altogether to *give* them to the Lord. 14 years ago, when our two-year-old fell off a bed and landed on her head, I was at church getting ready to preach. When I got the phone call, I left the church and drove home as fast as I could. I’ll never forget driving up old 66, with tears running down my face, as I said out loud, *“Lord, Megan belongs to you. I will still love you even if you take her.”*

Hannah loved Samuel so much that she was willing to forgo a mother’s greatest joy – that of bringing up her son and having him around her. She was committed to do whatever it took for him to reach his godly potential. Because Hannah had already settled the submission issue, she was able to keep the promise she had made.

Women of faith exhibit real problems and express vibrant prayers. They experience God’s provision and excel at keeping their promises. There’s one more defining trait…

**5. Women of faith explode with praise** (2:1-11). We don’t have time to plumb the depths of Hannah’s stirring psalm of praise in chapter two, but I do want to point out that there is no element of sadness here at all. She has just dropped off Samuel at the temple and now she breaks out into praise. She was thrilled to be able to parent a prophet!

Listen to verses 1-2: ***“My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. ‘There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.’”***

Notice that she doesn’t brag about how handsome Samuel is, or how smart he is, or how neat it is that he can say prayers at his young age. She overlooks the gift and gives praise to the Giver. There is no one else who is holy like the Lord and no one else who will be her Rock through the storms of life.

In verse 3 she focuses on God’s wisdom and knowledge, recognizing that He’s the one who weighs the actions of men and women. We shouldn’t brag about we have or what we do, because God knows our hearts. Hannah seems to be heckling Penninah just a bit after she starts having children in verse 5: ***“The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.”*** In verse 6, she acknowledges God’s ability to bring death and to make life. In verse 7, God is the one who sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and exalts. In verse 10, she uses the word ***“annointed”*** which is the word for “Messiah.” Mary no doubt had this canticle of praise memorized because her magnificat draws heavily from Hannah’s hymn.

Check this out. Hannah had a son who served a nation; Mary had a Son who saved the world.

Hannah is an example of a woman of faith. She endures years of silent suffering because of her barrenness and the cruel harassment at the hand of her rival. She goes to the place of worship, knowing how painful it is. She faithfully worships, pouring out her tears and petitions. And when God answers her prayers, she not only keeps her promise, she explodes with praise.

#### Application Points

**1. Women, you are of great worth in God’s sight whether or not you have a child.** Lift up your head and realize that God loves you for who you are, not for what you do or what you have. He understands your sorrow and your pain and He’ll meet you right where you are.

**2. I want to give a shout-out to adoptive mothers, stepmoms, and those serving with Safe Families.** You are standing in the gap! Way to go.

**3. Grandmoms can make a grand impact.** I guess I’m thinking more about this since Beth and I are about to be grandparents. I love the encouragement found in Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5: ***“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”***

**4. All women can become spiritual mothers.** As you live on mission by sowing the seed of the gospel, you can have the joy of having spiritual children.

**5. Mothers, make it your mission to give your children to the Lord for a lifetime of dedicated service.** There’s no greater purpose, and no higher honor, than to have your children give their lives in surrendered service to the Lord of Hosts. Samuel served as priest, prophet, judge and a king-maker. I was talking to our daughter Lydia this week and she mentioned that she has a friend who is working very hard to not let her four-week-old become the center of the world. She wants him to grow up knowing that Christ is the center of everything. These parents even refer to their son as a young sinner so that they always keep in mind that he needs the Savior to save him from his sins. Now that’s what I call parenting with a purpose!

**6. One of the lessons from the life of Hannah is that each of us needs to be growing in our own relationship with God.**  If you want your kids to learn about God, and to love Him with all they’ve got, Jesus first has to be real in your life.

I read a very helpful post this week called, *“The Beauty of Womanhood: Her Uniqueness Makes Her Essential.”* Mothers, sisters and daughters, drink in these words: *“In this transformative role, whether single or married, a woman mimics her Savior. Like him, she submits to another’s will and, also like him, God uses her to take what was useless on its own and shape it into glory.*

*A woman is a prism that takes in light and turns it into an array of greater, fuller glory, so that those around her now see the rainbow that was contained in the beam. She constantly radiates reminders of God’s faithfulness. She reads the black and white pages of the word of God and takes on the task of living them out in vibrant hues for her children, her neighbors, and the world to see…God’s design outlined in the Scriptures is a vision for womanhood that is not just right and to be obeyed, it is experientially better than all the world has to offer. And it doesn’t just apply to those who are married or mothers. Single women of any age are meant for full godly womanhood. To be a mother in the deepest sense — that is, spiritually — nurturing and growing all God’s given her.*

*God has made us for glory, women. Not glory that terminates on us, but glory that spends itself glorifying everything given to us and points in all things to Christ, who is the radiance of the glory of God, the Savior and ultimate transforming one. And as we behold him — his perfection, his saving work, his glorious face — we are changed from one degree of glory to another.”*

We started by standing and celebrating women. I wonder how many women are willing to stand now to demonstrate your desisire to be fully surrendered to the Savior. Can you say, “Yes, Lord” to Him right now? Are you ready to settle the sovereignty and servanthood issue? *Until you fully surrender, you won’t fully serve the Savior.*

I’d like every girl and every woman to stand so I can pray for you.

When I’m done, we’re going to cheer you on as you strive to be the women He’s called you to be.