

Answered  
June 5, 2016  
Allen Power

1 Samuel 1:10-18, 26-28

This begins our study in the book of 1 Samuel. This book of the Bible describes how Israel moved from a group of tribes to a nation ruled by judges, and then a monarchy ruled by a king. God chose to delegate authority over Israel to earthly kings. This set in motion the plan to make way for Jesus, the King of all Kings.

In 1 Samuel we'll learn about Saul, Israel's first king; King David, God's chosen human ancestor of Jesus; and Samuel the last judge and the "kingmaker" in God's plan for His people. Samuel's story begins with a touching account of his godly mother. A woman struggling with the pain of infertility and how God not only answered her prayer for a child, but used that child to help direct the future of the nation of Israel.

Here's the big idea of this lesson: Everyone experiences times of pain and heartbreak. God can turn your biggest heartache into a victory if you'll trust Him to do it!

- 1 Samuel chapter one begins with a "certain man" Elkanah, and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah had none. Verse five says God "closed" Hannah's womb.
- In that culture it was acceptable to have one wife to love and another to provide children. Obviously, Elkanah was wealthy enough for this plan.
- It's not surprising that having two wives would lead to a bad "love triangle." Especially when one wife could bear children and the other could not.
- In that culture, if a woman could not have children it was a major failure.
- Children not only meant love for a woman and pride for a father. Children also secured a woman's financial future. Most women were younger than their husbands, making for young widows.

Without children their future as a widow could be one of extreme poverty.

- Bottom line in that culture: A woman's prestige was based at least partly on her demonstrated ability to produce offspring.<sup>1</sup> That provided a "dagger" the "other woman" could use to pierce Hannah's heart.
- Peninnah was mean. She took great pleasure in tormenting Hannah.
- It's evident that Elkanah loved Hannah dearly but he wasn't the most sensitive husband. Verse eight: (NLT) <sup>8</sup> *"Why are you crying, Hannah?" Elkanah would ask. "Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?"* (Easy for him to say; he had children!)
- Her inability to have a child drove her to depression and physical sickness.
- Our culture may be different today; however infertility is still a very painful and heartbreaking struggle for many couples.
- Elkanah was very devout in his faith and went every year to worship God at a place called Shiloh. In Shiloh we will meet a priest named Eli.
- Year after year, Hannah would go with Elkanah to worship at Shiloh. Year after year she would pour out her heart to God about her situation.

1 Samuel 1:10–18 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> 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."

- **What is the first thing we can admire about Hannah? If you used one word to describe Hannah, what word would you use? Other words?**
- When we're struggling with a painful, heartbreaking situation, we can do what Hannah did: She poured out her pain to God.
- **Verse 11: What kind of "vow" did Hannah make to God?**

- This dedication of her son was a commitment to the Nazirite vow, described in Numbers 6:1–8. It was the same vow undertaken by the parents of Samson whom they dedicated to the Lord under nearly identical circumstances (Jud. 13:2–5)<sup>2</sup>
- We might say Hannah was “bartering” with God. **Why is that dangerous?**
- In the first place, God is God and we’re mere human beings. Who are we to try to “cut a deal” with Almighty God? Even if we’re not “bartering” with God, we may make a promise to Him if He answers our prayers.
- We all know the old saying: “Be careful what you wish for...” This is really true when we make a promise to God. “It’s dishonest and dangerous to ignore a promise, especially to God. God keeps His promises, and He expects you to keep yours.”<sup>3</sup>
- While we need to be cautious about making deals with God; we have to admire Hannah’s sacrificial and humble spirit. She was willing to give back to God this child she so desperately wanted.

<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. 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.” <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.

- Hannah was so emotional in her prayer that Eli, the priest, thinks she’s drunk. **What lessons do you see in this part of the story?**
- When we’re suffering with heartbreak, people may misunderstand.
- If God uses you or me to be an encouraging friend, keep in mind:

- o Like Eli, at first we might misunderstand what someone is going through. Be willing to listen to the full story of their struggle.
- o Like Hannah's husband, we might (with the best of intentions) try to divert their thinking ("I love you; isn't that enough; things aren't so bad.") Instead we need to listen well; point them to God as their source; then join them in asking Him to provide His perfect answer.
- The good news: Eli quickly "got it." Once he saw Hannah's sincerity and faithfulness in coming to God with her problems, he encouraged her. The text indicates he assured her that God would answer her prayer.<sup>4</sup>
- Ultimately, only God can change our situation; but He also uses godly people to encourage us. Ask Him to put people in your path to be your prayer partner in asking God to respond to the pain of your problem.
- Look at the end of verse 18: **What was Hannah's response after Eli encouraged her? How could she change so quickly?**
- Hannah left rejoicing and trusting in God to turn her pain into victory.
- Years later Peter would describe the way Hannah trusted God in her pain.
- 1 Peter 5:6-7 shows us how to deal with our pain and disappointment:
 

*<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.<sup>5</sup>*
- Hannah felt humiliated. She suffered anxiety and bitter grief (vexation). Yet she humbled herself under the hand of God trusting Him to exalt her. She cast all her anxieties on God because she knew He cared for her.
- I love the words at the end of verse 19: "...and the Lord remembered her." What a comfort to know that God never forgets us or our problem.
- Verse 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."
- Three years went by. And when she had stopped nursing Samuel, they made the journey back to Shiloh to fulfill her

promise to God. She made a “bee-line” for Eli the priest tugging little Samuel by the hand.

1 Samuel 1:26–28 (ESV)

<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. <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 worshiped the Lord there.

- God had turned Hannah’s deepest pain and disappointment into victory.
- Not only did she have a child, her child was destined to be Israel’s greatest judge and kingmaker. God had a plan she never imagined.
- Hannah could have turned from God in her bitterness. She could have retaliated against the other woman. She could have lashed out at her insensitive husband. Instead, she poured out her pain to God.
- Hannah’s story had a happy ending. What if God doesn’t answer your prayer in the way you’d like?
- Sometimes it’s a matter of timing. What feels like an unbearable delay to us may be God preparing us and our circumstances for His deliverance at the right time. God’s timing is perfect because He is perfect.
- Sometimes His answer is not what we want. Paul prayed three times for God to remove a “thorn in the flesh.” The thorn remained, yet God’s grace was sufficient in Paul’s life.
- So here’s the real question: Can you trust God in the midst of your pain?
- In his book, “Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts,” Jerry Bridges writes:

*“The question itself has two possible meanings before we attempt to answer it. Can you trust **God**, i.e., is He dependable in times of adversity? But the second meaning is also critical, can **you** trust God? Do you have such a relationship with God and such a confidence in Him that you believe He is with you in your adversity even though you do not see any evidence of His presence and His*

*power? It is not easy to trust God in times of adversity. No one enjoys pain, and when it comes, we want it relieved as quickly as possible.”<sup>6</sup>*

Bridges continues:

*“In the arena of adversity, the Scriptures teach us three essential truths about God—truths we must believe if we are to trust Him in adversity. They are:*

- *God is completely sovereign.*
- *God is infinite in wisdom.*
- *God is perfect in love.*

*Someone has expressed these three truths as they relate to us in this way: ‘God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.’”<sup>7</sup>*

*“In order to trust God we must know Him in an intimate, personal way. ...It is more than just knowing facts about God. It is coming into a deeper personal relationship with Him as a result of seeking Him in the midst of our personal pain and discovering Him to be trustworthy. It is only as we know God in this personal way that we come to trust Him. ...pray that the Holy Spirit of God will enable you to get beyond the facts about God so that you will come to know Him better, and so be able to trust Him more completely.”<sup>8</sup>*

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Everyone experiences pain and disappointment. God can REDEEM that pain and turn it into something for your good and His glory.
- Is there pain or disappointment in your life that you’ve buried deep or you’re numbing in some unhealthy way instead of dealing with it?
- How would it feel to get relief from that pain? How would it improve your quality of life, your relationships, your physical health?
- When you and I are struggling with a painful, frustrating, heartbreaking situation, we should do what Hannah did: She poured out her pain to God and left the results to Him and His perfect timing. She trusted Him to redeem her pain.
- Are you in a season of pain and disappointment? It’s good to talk to your family and trusted friends about it. But remember,

your family and friends can provide comfort; only your Heavenly Father can redeem your pain.

- This week, though it may be a scary thing, spend some time alone with God. Pour out your heart about that pain, frustration, and disappointment.
- Get real; be transparent; be humble; ask Him to turn your pain into victory. Then claim Psalm 34:18 (NLT):  
*<sup>18</sup> The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*
- God can turn your biggest heartache into a victory. Trust Him to do it!

<sup>1</sup> Hackett, J. A. (2012). 1 And 2 Samuel. In C. A. Newsom, J. E. Lapsley, & S. H. Ringe (Eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Revised and Updated, p. 154). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

<sup>2</sup> Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 433). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Life Application Study Bible copyright © 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 433). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Pe 5:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>6</sup> Bridges, Jerry. *Trusting God*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1988

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*