

**1 Samuel 1:1-20 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. <sup>2</sup>He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

<sup>3</sup>Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup>And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>Elkanah her husband would say to her, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?”

<sup>9</sup>Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. <sup>10</sup>In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. <sup>11</sup>And she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon 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.” <sup>12</sup>As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk <sup>14</sup>and said to her, “How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.” <sup>15</sup>“Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “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. <sup>16</sup>Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” <sup>17</sup>Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.” <sup>18</sup>She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

<sup>19</sup>Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup>So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

09-01-01-Hannah's Hope

persecution, hope, prayer, parenthood

1 Samuel 1:1-20

Hope's most powerful posture is on its knees.

**INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)**

–Hannah's story in **1 Sam** shows how strongly God can instill a desire for parenthood. Some women dream of motherhood before it happens. [In the book *Amazing Moms* by Brad and Sherry Steiger, a woman named Elizabeth had frequently recurring dreams of strolling with a little girl among fragrant flowers amid lovely symphonic music. These stopped at the birth of her daughter Lisa. Five years later, she took Lisa to a flower show where an orchestra was playing. Walking in the flower garden was like a *déjà vu* from her dream, and little Lisa pulled on her skirt, saying, “*We've been here lots and lots of times before, haven't we, Mommy?*”] –A pre-conception longing for motherhood can have *social, emotional, and spiritual* elements. This was the case in **Hannah's Hope** to *get pregnant*. What stands out most in her story is prayer: HOM.idea. And although praying hopefully may encounter obstacles...

**I. Hope Can Grow in the midst of Harsh Circumstances**

- A. Back then, marriage had a social expectation: children; infertility often led to polygamy– **v.2**, [Elkanah] *had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.* (Because listed *first*, Hannah was probably his *first wife*.)
- B. Hannah's faith was being tested– **v.5**, “*the LORD had closed her womb*” (Since God ultimately controls pregnancy, an *infertile but would-be mother* might ask: “What did I do to displease God?”)
- C. She also had a family trouble– **v.6-7**, ...*because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 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.* (Polygamy invites internal family strife. [A love triangle can end in a *wreck - tangle!*])
  1. Peninnah was uncompassionate and jealous. (Feeling wanted for her womb, not for *herself*, she might have been flaunting her success before his *first wife* to validate her own self-worth.)
  2. Elkanah was compassionate but lacked empathetic awareness:
    - a. In **v.8**, he told her, “*Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?*” (This could well have been Hannah's question, when her husband was contemplating polygamy, because of her barrenness.)

b. Men are known for *fixing things*, but people aren't easily fixed!

**TRANS:** [Roses have a harsh circumstance: *thorns!* Harvey Davidson of Orinda developed *Smooth Touch Thornless Roses* in 1962, but *why* isn't there a market for them today. People expect thorns & roses as a package deal.] *Hope can grow in harsh circumstances: health problems, faith struggles, family trouble ... Authentic hope doesn't require a completely hopeful environment.* [G. K. Chesterton said, "*As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is a mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.*" **Hope's most powerful posture is on its knees.** Harsh circumstantial pressure can push hope in the direction of praying, because...

## II. Hope Believes That God Listens to His People's Prayers

A. **Hannah trusted God to meet with her as He promised**— v.9a, *Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up.*

1. After the sacrificial meal, it seems her downcast spirit "*stood up*" to lay claim to God's promise in Exo 29:42-43. For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also **I will meet with** the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.
2. Authentic hope stands up on the promises of God's Word. [Listen to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza of this familiar hymn: "Standing on the promises that cannot fail / When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail; / By the living word of God I shall prevail— / Standing on the promises of God."]
3. God is a personal God Who meets to commune with us in a very special personal location: the place of prayer.

B. **Hannah trusted God to hear the yearning of her hurting heart**—

1. She expressed her longing and heartache by weeping in prayer:
  - a. God invented tears and tied them to our emotions. (He accepts both tears of joy and gratitude or tears of pain— v.10, *In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD.* )
  - b. When Eli suspected her of being drunk, she explained in v.16, "*I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.*"
    - (1) *Stuffing our feelings* never impresses their Creator!
    - (2) A capacity to express anguish and grief over death, sickness and barrenness echoes the human heart's innate mourning over Eden's original perfections, lost long ago through sin.
2. The heart's hope can't always be verbally expressed— v.12-13a, "*As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard.*"

- a. [Orthodox monks say that silently praying "the Jesus Prayer" or "prayer of the heart" is the most effective way to pray, because it *bypasses* our mental limitations and *arises directly from* where Christ has chosen to dwell.]
  - b. To defend her neglect of religious formality, Hannah told Eli in v.15, "*I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.*" (Prayer should never be to impress people but to lay the heart bare before God!)
- C. Hannah trusted God to grant her the gift of fertility:
1. In v.11a, she addressed herself to God as "your servant," believing that she could serve Him better through motherhood. [Old Jewish saying: "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers."]
  2. She made an unselfish vow in v.11b, "*I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life.*" [The marriage vow is "*to have and to hold,*" but the motherhood vow must be "*to have and to let go.*" The big temptation is for parental possessiveness to deform and twist mother love into "smother love."]
  3. After her hopeful prayer in Shiloh, Hannah returned home with an encouraging priestly blessing— v.17, Eli answered, "*Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.*"

## CONCLUSION:

—As she rose to leave, v.18 says "*her face was no longer downcast.*" Hannah's hope, expressed in prayer, had changed her from the inside out. Just as her sorrow had been very real, so her hopeful countenance was not a mask, but a true mirror of her transformed soul.

—In v.20, we see her prayer answered: *So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."* After weaning him, she brought him to that same tent of worship at Shiloh where she had prayed. She kept her vow and gave him to the Lord's service. Her prayer had materialized, but God's plan surpassed Hannah's hope. Samuel became not just a priest's servant, but the greatest prophet of God in his day.

—Hannah's hope grew in the midst of harsh circumstances. In fact, those circumstances pushed her into hope's most powerful posture, which **is on its knees** in prayer. Her hope was *to serve God* in a *bigger way...* in a *larger dimension* than previously. *That should also be our hope!* Obstacles of all sorts may seem to block that from happening. But let's follow the example of this faithful mother in Israel and pray with hope for God to open doors for us to greater service....