

1st Samuel Introduction and Chapter 1- John Karmelich

1. What is the opposite of faith? Is it to not have faith in something?
  - a) I'm going to argue that the opposite of faith is fear.
  - b) Let me show you a verse from Revelation:
    - i) "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Revelation 21:8 NIV)
    - ii) Here in Revelation, it is talking about people who spend eternity in hell. Even before any mention of sexually immoral and other types of sins, the word "cowardly" is mentioned. They are the first group mentioned who are sent to hell.
    - iii) Now does that mean if you are afraid to speak up for Jesus you are going to hell? The good news is no. ☺ This is a different topic. This verse in Revelation is about those who were too afraid to commit their life to Jesus in the first place.
  - c) Faith is about trusting in things you can't see. We are trusting in a God we can't see. None of us physically saw Jesus rise from the dead, but we are trusting in that fact as the part of the basis of our salvation.
    - i) Wouldn't the opposite of that type of faith simply be "unfaith"? Wouldn't the opposite of faith simply be "I don't believe that is true"?
    - ii) Technically no. Think about why one doesn't have the "faith" to say, sit in a chair: It is because they are afraid it won't hold their weight. Why does one not have the faith to go into an elevator? It is because they are afraid it might fall. The same applies to our trust in God. When we trust in ourselves and not what God wants us to do, it is because we are afraid of trusting in what God wants us to do at any given moment.
2. Gee John, that's neat. What does any of this have to do with 1st Samuel? ☺
  - a) I'm so glad you asked that question! I was wondering that myself. ☺
  - b) The book of 1st Samuel, focuses on 3 main characters:
    - i) 1) Samuel himself. He actually dies near the end of 1st Samuel.
    - ii) 2) King Saul. He is the first king of Israel.
    - iii) 3) King David. He is the second king. He is loved so much by God that a promise was given to David specifically that the Messiah would be his direct descendant.
  - c) Again, what does any of that have to do with "Fear and faith"?
    - i) The two main characters of 1st Samuel are Saul and David. The "big picture" idea is to see the contrast being King Saul and King David.
    - ii) "Saul" becomes a word-picture of someone who doesn't have faith. He believes there is a God, yet trusts in his own wits for survival.
      - a) Saul was a man who was stricken by fear. Through 1st Samuel, we will watch Saul's fear grow to a point where it overtakes him.
      - b) At the end of this book, Saul dies of suicide out of his own fears.
    - iii) David is a model of someone who does trust in God first and foremost.
      - a) We watch him grow from a "nobody". He was the youngest of eight sons. He was a lowly shepherd. By the end of the book, he is the King of Israel. The story of David in this book is a story of maturity as he learns to trust God more and more.
  - d) Note that David is not perfect and Saul is not the Antichrist. ☺
    - i) We see faults with David in this book. The point is when he does mess up, he is willing to confess those faults, move on with his life and trust God even more so.

- ii) Saul in his early days, has a few shining moments. He does believe in God and does a few positive things. Most of this book focuses on the decline of Saul as he refuses to be obedient to what God asks him to do.
  - iii) Does this mean Saul is in hell? The text doesn't say. Saul still trusted in the "true God", but Saul lost eternal heavenly rewards due to a lack of obedience. A Christian who is fearful to step out in faith is still saved if they are trusting in Jesus for their salvation. That person, like Saul is at a low level of maturity.
3. What about Samuel? The book is named after him ☺ What's his role?
- a) The first seven chapters deal with Samuel himself. Those chapters discuss his miraculous birth and how God used that situation to raise up Samuel as a leader.
  - b) The most important role about Samuel is that God used him to anoint both Saul and David as king. In that sense he is a "type" of the Holy Spirit. A "background" character who's job it was to get our focus upon God.
  - c) Back to my main theme, I see the Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel as dealing with "fear and faith". The character of Samuel himself has the role as the spiritual leader. Like the Holy Spirit, He is the one carrying out the desire of God the Father that all people worship Him. Samuel works primarily through the leadership of Israel.
  - d) Samuel is important, historically in that he is the first recorded "prophet" in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament history, God raised up individuals to give messages to the kings of Israel and the Jewish people.
    - i) There are bible books named after prophets, (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah), but as one reads the historical bible books, you will find mention of other prophets as well.
    - ii) Technically, Samuel is not the first prophet as Abraham (Genesis 20:7) and Moses (Deut. 18:15) were also described as prophets. Samuel was the first "non-leader" of Israel to have that title.
4. Now that I've gotten all of that out of my system, welcome to a study of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel. ☺
- a) This is a study of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel on a verse-by-verse basis.
  - b) I'm going to cover the book at a one to two-chapter per week basis.
  - c) For the newcomer's to this study, it's time for my standard disclaimers. ☺
    - i) It is impossible for me, or any bible teacher to do a detailed analysis of every word and every verse in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel. My primary interest in these studies is "how do they apply to our life?" I like to focus on the "why" question. For example, I like to ask, "Why is this verse here and how is it relevant to the story and our lives?"
    - ii) I'm not so much interested in the historical detail, although I do give some of that in order to explain the story.
    - iii) I like to summarize these studies with three questions: "What does the text say? What does the text mean? And what does the text have to do with our life?"
    - iv) I also believe that the bible is the inspired Word of God, and the bible, in its "original autographs" is the Word of God. The copies we have today are so close to the original that the differences are truly insignificant in terms of each and every important theme of Christianity. When controversial verses do come up, I explain the different views and theories about them.
    - v) Remember that 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel was written in Hebrew. I use the New International Version® (NIV) translation of the bible, but there is no such thing as a perfect translation from one language to another. Often in these studies I will explain the "thought" if the translation given is not adequate. Again, the primary focus of these studies is not on making the perfect translation, but on bible application.
    - vi) For those interested in my sources for these lessons, as well as all the copyright issues, they are always listed as an appendix in the last lesson.

5. This might be a good time to summarize the entire book:
  - a) When the book starts, the nation of Israel is at a “spiritual low”. They are not organized under any king. People basically did what they wanted. There was no major threat from say, a big empire like the Babylonians at this time, but there were some nearby tribes that were causing problems. The leaders at that time were “judges”. They were called judges because God used them to “judge” (i.e., defeat) the enemies of Israel.
  - b) Through a series of special events Samuel was born. His mother Hannah was barren. She tells God that if God gives her a son, she will turn that son over to work for God all of his life (work for the high priests). Hannah gets pregnant, by age 2-3 Samuel was given over (his mother still visited him). Hannah goes on to have more children.
  - c) Samuel ends up being the spiritual leader of Israel. The religious leaders in charge prior to Samuel were corrupt and were killed.
  - d) The Nation of Israel wants to have a king like the other surrounding nations. God sends a message through Samuel that first of all, “You don’t need a king, because all you need is God to watch out for you.” They still want a king. It was God’s intent to give them King David, but the mistake of the Nation of Israel was to not wait on God’s timing. Therefore, God told Samuel to find this “Saul-person” ☺ and anoint him King.
  - e) God told Samuel to tell the nation of Israel of all the “woes” that will happen because they want this particular king. The nation responded with a collective yawn, ☺ and then anointed Saul as their king.
  - f) During Saul’s early years as King, we read of a few stories of the heroics of David. Here is where the famous story of “David versus Goliath” takes place.
  - g) For the remainder of the book, we are going to read of the rise of David and the fall of Saul. There are some key points where Saul is deliberately disobedient to what God called him to do. It finally got to a point where Samuel announces to Saul that he will no longer be king (not immediately) and that none of his sons would rule after him.
  - h) The latter part of this book is Saul trying to “prevent” that prediction of his doom from happening. There are several chapters of Saul trying to kill David and prevent him from taking over the kingdom.
6. Now on to the question most of you are wondering: Why are there two Samuel books? ☺
  - a) Originally 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel were one book. We have archeological evidence that when this book was composed, it was simply titled “Kings” since most of “Samuel” is about the life of the first two kings of Israel.
  - b) About 100-200 years before Christ, a Greek translation made of the Old Testament. Obviously there was no New Testament yet, so the bible-to-date was just all the books of the Old Testament, as we know it. It is called the “Septuagint” which means, “the seventy”. It was named after the fact that 70 men worked on this translation.
  - c) The common language of that era was Greek. Hebrew was becoming a dead language or just a “bible scholar language”. After Alexander the Great conquered the “known world”, including Israel, the common language of that world was Greek.
  - d) My point is when the Septuagint was made, “Samuel” was separated into 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel by the Jewish (again, pre-Jesus) scholars. That book was called “1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings”, as again, it described the rise of King Saul and King David. What we know as “1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings” was “3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Kings” in that translation.
  - e) When the Latin translation of the entire bible was put together around 300-400AD, the book was titled 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, and well, that name stuck.
  - f) Modern Jewish bibles have one book called “Samuel”. The original Hebrew text is the same for Jews and for Christians.
  - g) 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel ends with the death of Saul, which begins the reign of King David.
  - h) 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel ends with the death of King David.

7. So who wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and when was it written?
- a) Most likely, Samuel himself wrote most of the book. Since he dies at Chapter 25 Verse 1, I doubt he wrote the whole thing, unless he used a ghostwriter. ☺ (Yes, that was bad.)
  - b) The last chapters were added by the two prophets who succeeded Samuel, which were Gad and Nathan. There are references to both of these men in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel.
  - c) The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles also supports this: "As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer, together with the details of his reign and power, and the circumstances that surrounded him and Israel and the kingdoms of all the other lands." (1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:29, NIV)
  - d) 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel itself were not compiled and edited until at least the time of David's grandson, Rehoboam. This is because 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel makes a reference to the "split kingdom", (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 27:6) and that event doesn't happen until the time of Rehoboam. Most likely, there were writings by Samuel and Gad and Nathan, and those were combined and edited into the book of "Samuel".
  - e) The "time frame" is estimated at 1,105 to 971 BC.
  - f) Also remember the chapter breaks and verse numbers were not added until the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Those were added for our reference.
8. Let's talk a little about Jesus and 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel.
- a) This is Christian bible study. It doesn't hurt to mention Jesus every now and then. ☺
  - b) I'm one of those who believe Jesus is woven throughout all of the Old Testament. I use Jesus' own words for my support: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These (Old Testament) are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV)
    - i) Finding Jesus in the Old Testament is most often through word-pictures. This is far more common than direct references to the coming Messiah himself.
  - c) The most important point of Samuel as it ties to the promised Messiah (i.e., "king"). The nation of Israel was promised that a king would rule over them forever. That promise was made to David, who became the direct forefather of Jesus himself.
  - d) The concept of the Israelites having a king goes back 400-500 years earlier to a prediction made by Moses: "When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers." (Deuteronomy 17:14-15 NIV)
  - e) God makes this promise to David in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel: "He (a descendant of David) is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:13 NIV).
  - f) If God said David's descendant would have a "kingdom", then God is "endorsing" a king to rule over Israel, and the whole earth for that matter.
  - g) My point of all of this is simply to show that God intended to have a king of Israel and the first one God "wanted" was David. God also promised David that one of his descendants would rule over Israel forever.
  - h) Now let's tie this to something said by an angel to Mary at Jesus' birth:
    - i) "He (Jesus) will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father (ancestor) David" (Luke 1:32 NIV)
    - ii) The prediction made to Mary has not literally happened yet. To any Jew of that time era, to have the "throne of David" would be a literal king-on-earth to rule over all of Israel. Right now, Jesus as at "His Father's throne". There is also a literal 1,000-year time era (Revelation 20) where Jesus rules from earth.

- iii) Through this genealogical “line”, Jesus will be born. Both Mary and Joseph have King David as their ancestor. Even though this was a virgin birth, it still counts in the same way an adopted son of a king is still the king’s son.
    - i) So is that it? The “Jesus of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel” is just the rise of David, which has a descendant that is Jesus? Well, that’s pretty important, ☺ but there is more to it than that!
      - i) The key is to watch the pattern. David “rises from nowhere”, is initially rejected as king, and is then accepted. There are lots of comparisons of Jesus First Coming and Jesus’ Second Coming to the life of David. We’ll get into that in the lessons.
      - ii) What is important here is to understand that:
        - a) God predicted hundreds of years earlier of the rise of kings over Israel.
        - b) In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, we actually see the start of the era of the kings.
        - c) These predictions include the fact that a descendant of the first “true” king that pleased God, is Jesus himself.
        - d) There are “patterns” in the life of David we will see that model what Jesus taught and are word-pictures of Jesus himself.
9. There is one more “big-picture” idea I want you to see from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, and that is the idea of “redemption”.
- a) If I had to pick the one word that describes most bible stories, it is the idea of redemption. Biblical redemption is the idea of “changing something from worthless to valuable”.
  - b) In modern advertising we use the word “redemption:” with store coupons. You may see an ad in the paper saying, “Redeem this coupon and receive 10% off your purchase”. Well, that coupon has no value unless you actually apply that coupon. It is a worthless piece of paper unless it is used.
    - i) In a strange way, we as people are that “worthless” coupon because of our sins. A perfect God cannot spend eternity with us if we are not perfect ourselves. Thus we need to be “redeemed” and Jesus paid that price. In this silly little illustration, only Jesus can redeem our “lives as coupons.” ☺ That is the idea of redemption.
  - c) What you have to see in the bible is not only are individual people “redeemed” for all of eternity, but groups and nations are also redeemed to have a better relationship with God. We can pray for “redemption” of our church, our city, our country, etc. in order to go grow in maturity or to restore a broken relationship. That is the story of the Nation of Israel in Samuel. In Samuel, the Israelites were at a very low point at the start of the book.
    - i) The book(s) of Samuel historically, pick up right after the Book of Judges. Judges covers a 400-year period from the time of Moses and his successor Joshua. Samuel starts off where Judges leaves off. The person Samuel himself is the last of the judges and is a bridge between the period of judges and the period of the kings.
    - ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel ends with the establishment of the nation of Israel as a great power. By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, Israel is united as a powerful country. David is established as a king and there are no significant enemies. The size of Israel was at its peak.
    - iii) Again, my point here is that “redemption” is not just about people, it is about nations. God took a lowly “nothing” nation, that was barely even organized and by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel turned it into a powerful nation. You can say it was David’s leadership that brought them together, but more importantly, it was God raising up David as a redeemer of Israel. Despite the fact he was rejected through a good part of the Samuel books, despite the fact that King Saul made his best effort to kill him, David became the redeemer of Israel.
  - d) The application to you and me is that not only does God redeem “us” to salvation and maturity in our relationship to Him, but also redeems “nations” that collectively turn to God as a living witness to Him.

- i) I take the view that the United States is “something special” as long as we remain a shining witness for the God of the Bible. Since we commit ourselves to serving God, God’s “reputation is on the line” and thus God protects us as a nation.
  - ii) The story of the Book of Samuel is also a reminder that God is “in the miracle business”. If our country is at a morale low point, God can save this nation by the prayers of those who seek God and depend upon God for their lives.
10. OK, enough introduction. The title of this lesson is Introduction and Chapter 1 and I meant it. ☺
- a) Let me summarize chapter 1: The main character in Chapter 1 is a woman named Hannah. She is one of two wives to the same guy. The other wife had at least four children, but Hannah was barren. Every year this family travels in Israel from their home to where the “main temple” (i.e., the tabernacle) was located. Hannah prays that if God would give her a baby, she would give it back to God. What she meant was that once the child stopped nursing, that child would be raised by the priests of that temple and she would only see that child, say, once a year at their annual pilgrimage. God granted that request, and the baby was named Samuel. In chapter 2, God then “rewarded” Hannah with five more children. (Gee, I don’t know if that’s a reward or punishment. ☺)
  - b) Now let’s get back to the opening topic of this letter: “Fear and faith”.
    - i) Imagine how much faith it took for Hannah to make that vow in the first place. Here is a woman that desperately wanted children, and she was willing to take the one child God gave her, and she gave that child “back to God”. She would only see that son of hers once per year. It wasn’t until at least 2-3 years later that God gave her more children.
    - ii) I’m sure the hardest day of Hannah’s life was the day she had to turn over her child Samuel over to the priests. That must have been a tough goodbye for both of them. A point here is she got past her fear of not having any children and stuck to her commitment to God despite her fears.
    - iii) That is the lesson for us. Fear is a part of life. The point is to work our way through those fears and still stick to what God called us to do.
  - c) With all that said, we’re actually ready to tackle Verse 1.
11. Chapter 1, Verse 1: 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.
- a) The first two verses focus on the husband of the main character, Hannah.
  - b) His name is Elkanah. His “pedigree” is listed in Verse 1.
  - c) Probably the most important thing to learn about Elkanah was that he was a godly man.
    - i) Don’t take that lightly. If you read the last few chapters of the Book of Judges, this is a time of a spiritual low for the Nation of Israel. Basically, people did “whatever they wanted” and ignored God.
    - ii) Here was this man Elkanah who still did what was required of him in the Law of Moses. In Verse 3, it states Elkanah annually visited the temple to Worship God.
  - d) I suspect a reason Elkanah’s father, grandfather and great grandfather are listed in Verse 1 is that they were also “godly men”. It is as if God is singling out this one family for their faithfulness during a time when the nation was collectively ignoring God.
  - e) The lesson to learn from Elkanah is “You never know how God is going to use you”. Let’s face it, if Elkanah ignored God, it is most likely that his wives would not have a strong faith in God as well. If it wasn’t for Elkanah’s father, grandfather, etc., having a strong faith in God, that never would have been past on to Elkanah. The “important part” of this family is that it produced Samuel. Samuel went on to be a great leader in Israel.

- f) We may think that our lives as Christians are insignificant, but one never knows how God is going to use us. You're life may only seem as significant as say, Elkanah's great grandfather. Well, if it wasn't for great granddad, the trust in God may not have been passed down from generation to generation. God would still raise up a "redeemer" for Israel, but God might have chosen a different family if each member didn't "keep their part" and pass on their faith in God to another.
- g) There is also another reason this short genealogy is given. There is a cross-reference to the same genealogy in 1 Chronicles, Chapter 6. We discover that Samuel is of the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was called to be the priests of Israel. Samuel will eventually take over that job, and this genealogy shows Samuel is "qualified".
- h) In Verse 3, we also get introduced to other characters: Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli. In Chapter 3, we will discover that Eli is the "high priest" of Israel. His two sons are Hophni and Phinehas.
- i) These two sons are essentially, jerks. ☺ They don't do what God requires them to do and are more interested in their own lives than obedience to God. In Chapter 3, we will read of their fall from the duties of being God's priests.
- i) Now let's discuss Hannah, her husband Elkanah, and Elkanah's other wife Peninnah.
- i) First, let's discuss the idea of polygamy. This is when a man has two wives. The bible never endorses polygamy, it just tolerates it. You never read in the bible of a man having more than one wife who then had a positive experience. Every polygamy bible story had lots of problems dealing with both wives. Trying to make one woman happy is a challenge in itself, I can't see why anyone would want to take on more than one. ☺
- ii) There are passages in the Old Testament that deal with "fairness" of dealing with more than one wife. (E.g., Exodus 21:10). The idea is God is saying, "OK, you want to have more than one wife? Sigh...ok, but here are some ground rules I want you to follow if you want to do this."
- iii) So if Elkanah was such a "godly man", why did he have two wives? Verse 5 says that Elkanah loved Hannah, but it never says he loved his other wife Peninah. Maybe Elkanah married Hannah first, but when she wasn't producing kids, he took on a second wife (Peninah) for that purpose.
- iv) What we do know is the fact that the two wives had fights and caused problems for Elkanah. It didn't "help his life" that he had two wives.
- v) What is interesting is the text does not focus on why Elkanah did this. What it did say about the guy is he took the time every year to travel to where the main tabernacle was located. It showed his obedience to God despite the fact he was still a "sinner".
- j) A quick history lesson on the tabernacle, for those who are interested. ☺
- i) About 400 years prior to this time, God gave instructions to Moses to build a portable structure called "The Tabernacle". The more permanent structure of "The Temple" wasn't built until Solomon, the son of King David. The tabernacle that Elkanah visited was the same one that existed for 400 years. After that time frame, I'm sure "parts were replaced". There is even speculation that a temple-like structure(s) were built around the original Tabernacle, but the point is this 400 year old structure was still in Israel and some people still went there to sacrifice.
12. Verse 4: 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.

- a) In these verses, we read of the problems caused by Hannah's barrenness.
- b) Her husband was aware of the problem and gave her "double portions". When animals were sacrificed to God, part of the animal was eaten by the "givers". It was a way of "communing" with God by eating part of the sacrifice. Hannah got a "double burger" while the other wife got a "single burger". ☺
- c) We read of Peninnah provoking Hannah "in order to irritate her".
  - i) We also read that Elkanah loved Hannah and there is no mention whether or not Elkanah also loved Peninnah. That jealousy is probably what got Peninnah to "irritate" and harass Hannah. Here was Hannah getting the double-portion. I suspect that was a typical incident that fueled Peninnah's hatred of Hannah.
  - ii) You have to remember that in this culture, the most important "duty" for a woman is to produce children for her husband. Peninnah felt unappreciated by her husband (i.e., unloved) and took it out on Hannah.
- d) The lesson for us to learn about Peninnah is to be grateful of what God does give us and not push for more. She had at least four children. Notice she had sons and daughters. That means there is at least two of each. Yet she was "unsatisfied" with what God gave her and caused her to sin against Hannah.
- e) The next thing to see is this from the perspective of Hannah.
  - i) She had no idea what God's plan was. She believed in God, but went through the suffering of barrenness, not to mention a woman who was a pain in her life. She had no idea about the plans for "Samuel" prior to this event.
    - a) The lesson to learn is we have to work on God's timing and not ours.
    - b) Often God's timing is waiting for us to pray specifically for God's will. God's will was to have Hannah dedicate a child to God. Until Hannah reached that point, God "shut up the womb."
  - ii) Remember that this wasn't a "one-day thing". This went on for years as stated in Verse 7. If Peninnah had at least four children, that is, at the least a 4-5 year period where Hannah had to go through all of this.
- f) Before I move on, we should talk a little about "God and pregnancy". The text says, "The Lord had closed her womb" in Verse 5.
  - i) I know of a large ministry today called "Hannah's Ministry®". It is to help women who are suffering from barrenness.
  - ii) Unfortunately, it is not as simple as, "Dear God, give me a child today, and I'll give him or her back to you". Many women try that today, and it's not a guarantee. That particular prayer was God's will for Hannah, not for everyone.
  - iii) The lesson to learn is that God has a plan for all women. God does call some women into barrenness. We often don't know the reason. Maybe there is an "adoptee" that God is waiting to be used. Like Hannah, it may be a timing issue.
  - iv) So what is "God's will" in such issues? There is no across-the-board correct answer. What may be God's will for one person is something else for another.
  - v) The bible teaches us to "keep praying and keep moving". God can't open your womb unless you are trying. ☺ I also happen to be "pro-in vitro" which is a scientific method to help people have children. If God truly wants to "close a womb", then in vitro won't help anyway. Since we don't know God's will for our future, God wants us to use whatever gifts, talents and technology are at our disposal. Bible characters used whatever gifts, talents and resources they had at hand, and so should we.
  - vi) It is also important here to pray for discernment. Ask God specifically, "Lord, how do you want me to pray in this situation? What changes can I make in my life to be in conformance to your will? Remember God is always looking for availability, not ability.

13. Verse 8: 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?"
- a) Every time I read this verse I laugh. It sounds like your typical egotistical male trying to comfort the wife with "Oh honey, why do you need kids when you've got me?" ☺
    - i) The wife then stops, takes a good look at the husband, and starts crying again. ☺
  - b) Elkanah understands what the problem is and how sad she is about her bareness. The line about "I'm better than 10 sons" is about how well he treats her. It is his way of trying to make up for his grief. This verse is a reminder to men that there is "only so much we can do" when someone is grieving. Often the best things we can do is just "be there and listen" and not try to fix the situation. Sometimes men, a good question to ask your mate before she starts a long explanation is, "Is this a situation where you just want me to listen, or do you want my advice at the end?"
14. Verse 9: 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."
- a) Now we come to the climax of this chapter. Here is the part where Hannah makes the prayer of dedication of the baby to God.
  - b) Don't take this prayer lightly. Imagine a person going for years and not having what they truly want. In this case it was a child. Hannah is saying if you just give me the "pleasure of having a baby" (she obviously doesn't know labor pains yet. ☺), then I'll turn around and give that baby back to you." That meant that she couldn't watch that child grow from day to day. It meant she could only see the child once a year, and for the most part, had to forget about that child.
    - i) I suspect, but can't prove is Hannah is praying for God to "get her womb active again". She wants to give her first child over to the priests and then she can have more children for herself.
    - ii) You also have to remember the priesthood is corrupt at this point. Chapter 2 mentions that the two High Priest sons were having sexual relations with women at the door of the tabernacle (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:22). Imagine having to turn your son over to these guys! Most Christian moms I know don't even trust the babysitters at church, let alone have to turn their child over to these characters. ☺ Imagine the temptation of Hannah to go back on her vow based on these two guys!
  - c) There is a great term here called relinquishment. It means to truly "give in" of one's desires in order to have a better relationship with God.
    - i) I'm sure Hannah tried to strike all sorts of deals with God prior to making this commitment. Notice Hannah never lost her faith in God despite this pain. She understood God was on the throne and for "whatever reason" it was God's decision not to let her have children up to this point.
    - ii) Notice also that Hannah trusted in God after making this vow. Hannah had sex with her husband after this vow knowing that it was "up to God" and not up to her. Still, she "took the footsteps" necessary to make God's will happen.
  - d) This leads to the question: Can you strike a bargain with God?
    - i) In this case, it appears that God agrees to her terms. In Verse 5, the text stated that God had closed her womb. In Verse 19, the text says that God "remembered" Hannah". It is as if God agreed to accept Hannah's vow.
    - ii) In a sense, the answer is yes, in that a purpose of prayer is to get our will in conformance with God's will. What appears to be a "bargain" from our perspective is simply we agreeing to what God wants for our lives.

- e) The next question is, "Was the vow necessary?"
    - i) Jesus essentially says in the "Sermon on the Mount" speech that vows are not necessary. He says "let your yes be yes and your no be no" (Matthew 5:37). To state anything over and above that is unnecessary.
    - ii) If you do make a vow, God expects you to honor that vow no matter how much the circumstances change. At that point, it is about obedience and having a reputation of "being a man or woman of my word". If you don't have an honest reputation, what will people think when you tell them about God?
    - iii) As for Hannah, it is simply speculation as to whether or not it was necessary. It was "God's will" for her son Samuel to be the high priest. I suspect if she didn't make the vow, it would have happened "some other way."
  - f) Verse 1 of Chapter 1 starts with "There was a certain man...". Chapter 1 says the story is about Hannah's husband, but most of the chapter is about Hannah herself.
    - i) Remember this was a male dominant culture. The bible even states that if a woman makes a vow, the husband (or the father) has a right to "veto" that vow and for all intents and purposes, makes the vow null and void (Numbers 30).
    - ii) Hannah's husband Elkanah then agreed to this plan of turning a son over to God. Give the guy a little credit for going along with this plan.
15. Verse 12: 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."
- a) In that culture, temple prayer was always prayed out loud. Therefore, when the priests saw Hannah praying silently with her lips moving, they assumed she was drunk.
  - b) Obviously God heard and answered this prayer. The "type" of prayer is a reminder that it is not the style of prayer that is important, but the sincerity of the prayer. The bible is full of answered prayers of people praying silently, publicly, standing, sitting, etc.
  - c) It is interesting to consider that Eli the priest "assumed the worst" and assumed Hannah was drunk. It is a statement about the culture of that time.
    - i) In the New Testament, the "church" was born on a Jewish Feast day of Pentecost. On that day, people spoke in tongues. Scoffers who refused to believe it was any type of movement of God "assumed the worse" and said the early church was drunk. (Acts 2:13). My point is that here in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel as well as Acts you are always going to have scoffers and doubters about your sincerity toward God and your faith in whatever God calls you to do.
16. Verse 15: "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."
- a) Hannah takes the time to defend herself to the high priest (Eli).
  - b) Notice what Hannah does not say, "Bug off your holiness, I'm busy praying." ☺
  - c) First of all, the bible calls us to be respectful to those in charge, especially our church leaders. When Paul was in front of the High Priest and insults him, Paul apologizes as he didn't know the guy was the High Priest and the bible states that we should not speak evil of a ruler. (Reference Acts 23:4, Exodus 22:28)
  - d) Hannah uses this moment to be a witness to the priest.
17. Verse 17: Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."
- a) Notice Eli didn't ask about the "specifics" of the prayer. He basically understood that she was sincerely praying and gave a nice generic answer of "May God bless your prayer".
  - b) Remember that Eli was going to "inherit" Samuel in a few years. He had no idea that by condoning this prayer he was going to inherit a boy to raise! ☺ This is just a nice example of how "God moves people's hearts" to get His will accomplished.

18. Verse 18: 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.
- This is my favorite verse in the chapter. That means pay attention. ☺
  - Notice what Hannah does not say: "Gee I hope God answers my prayer and I'll get pregnant now."
  - The text says, "She...was no longer downcast." That means she was truly trusting God with answering her prayer and her vow. It is Hannah thinking, "OK, I've made this vow. It is now God's problem. It is no longer my problem. God is big enough that He can handle this situation so I no longer have to worry about it".
  - Let's face it: Hannah was not even pregnant yet. She just finishing making the vow and now she's happy.
  - That is a great lesson in relinquishment. It is to pray, "God, this situation is now your problem. I'm turning it over to you. I'm not going to worry about it anymore".
  - There is a classic joke of a man who was so sick off worrying that he hires a man to worry for him. He tells this to his wife. She asks him how much it costs. He said, \$10,000 per month. She responds, but you only make \$5,000 per month. He responds, "Yeah, but that's his job to worry about it." ☺
    - That's the idea behind relinquishment. If we truly turn over the situation to God, we are now "letting God worry about it and not us".
    - It is often helpful to do this in "baby steps". Tell God, "For the next five minutes, I'm not going to worry about this." Then try another five minutes, etc."
19. Verse 19: 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."
- Verses 19-20 are the happy ending. She trusted in God and "took the footsteps" to have sexual relations with her husband. I'm guessing her husband knew about the vow and "couldn't wait" to see if was going to happen.
  - The name Samuel means "Asked of God". Hannah names Samuel after the vow she took. His name became a public witness to answered prayer.
20. Verse 21: When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow,<sup>22</sup> Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always."<sup>23</sup> "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.
- Remember that every year Elkanah and his two wives made this pilgrimage from their hometown to where the tabernacle was. Without getting into a lot of geography details, this is a 20-mile trip on foot, or say, on donkey.
  - It was customary in that culture to nurse a child until he was two or three. (They didn't have "formula" or baby bottles). Therefore, when Samuel was one, Hannah stayed home from the annual pilgrimage. Since the high priest can't feed the baby, she stayed back.
  - Personally, one speculates if she just "wasn't ready" to turn the baby over yet. She wanted a child so badly and to commit this vow means giving up what she wanted more than anything in the world.
  - The great lesson of Hannah giving up her son is about trusting God with the first of our resources. I believe Hannah was hoping that God would bless her with more children after she turned the first one over for God's service. In Chapter 2, we'll read where Hannah ended up having five more children.

- e) This reminds me of the principal of tithing. This is about giving 10% of your net income (i.e., “take home pay”) to God. .
  - i) Tithing is the only thing I know where God dares you to test to see if he’s real:
    - a) “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Malachi 3:10).
    - ii) Like Hannah and her first son, God is saying the same thing with us and our resources. He is saying, “Give the first to me and watch what I’ll do.” Who we give it to is a lecture for another day. This is about trusting God and literally “putting our money where our mouth is”.
    - iii) I have found that God will never be a debtor to man. I have yet to meet a person who has gone broke giving too much to God. (Dealing with religious con men is another issue. This is about those who give regularly to their own church.)
- f) Let’s get back to this paragraph: The story emphasizes how the husband “approved” of her actions. He agreed for her not to make the trip and wait another year to turn Samuel over to God.
  - i) As great a woman of faith as Hannah was, her husband doesn’t get enough credit. He also wanted a son from her. He also agreed to the whole vow thing. He also agreed to the timing of waiting another year. God puts the husband in charge and he bears the responsibility as the leader of the family. The text is emphasizing that fact. Not for the sake of the husband’s ego, but to remind us that God puts the responsibility on the husband as the final authority.

21. Verse 24: After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. <sup>25</sup> When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, <sup>26</sup> and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. <sup>28</sup> So 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.

- a) To me, these verses would make a great scene for a movie. This is the big scene where Hannah takes her 2 or 3-year-old son to be a priest, knowing she would never see him again other than on annual visits. The family goes through the required sacrifice ritual and then tells Eli the Priest, “Hi, remember me?” ☺
  - i) Imagine Hannah talking this 20-mile trip with her son, knowing she would never see him again.
  - ii) Imagine the crying the boy must have been doing watching his family leave without him. Imagine how difficult leaving would be for Hannah!
  - iii) There wouldn’t be a “dry eye in the house” if that was a movie scene.
- b) That is why the opening section of Chapter 2 is so important: (Don’t worry, I wont. ☺)
  - i) That chapter opens with Hannah praising God. During the extremely difficult moments of life, praising God for what He has accomplished, what He promises to do for our lives and what God is doing in our lives is essential. More on that in the next lesson. ☺
- c) I find this scene interesting from the perspective of Eli the High Priest. Imagine Eli thinking why Hannah is saying in a sense, “Hey, remember two years ago when I was here crying and you said “May God grant you my petition”. Well, my petition is for you to raise my son. So here he is.” I can just see the shock on his face! ☺

22. Let's get back to my opening theme of "fear and faith", and then we'll wrap up this intro:
- a) It's hard for me right now to try to think of a more wonderful example of "faith" than Hannah at this moment. Despite the difficulty of the situation, she knows she made a commitment to God and therefore must be obedient to that commitment.
  - b) I'm guessing she probably heard about the reputation of Eli's two sons. It's hard to keep that type of stuff a secret. Despite that, she still agrees to turn Samuel over to Eli.
  - c) After wanting a child so bad for so many years, imagine the strength it took to walk away from him because of that commitment.
  - d) The lesson to you and I is that God requires obedience despite the short-term pain it may bring us. Hannah didn't know at this point that God was going to give her five more children. Whenever God requires us to make a great sacrifice, you can count on the fact that God has a greater blessing for us once we pass that test of faith. The point is we have to sincerely "let go" of our fears, our doubts etc., before God can grant us the blessings for making that commitment.
23. Let's pray: Father, having faith in difficult situations can be overwhelming. We know that all good things come from you, and that includes our faith. Give us the strength and boldness to stick to our commitments despite our fears. Guide us as we go out to glorify You. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.