



## ***Shattered Mom's Club***

### Session Three

## **Hannah: Lost in Longing**

We find the story of Hannah in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel. To get an idea of when she lived, we look at who the priest in charge of the temple was at the time. It was Eli. If you know who Eli was, he had two sons that were very wicked. This is at a downhill slide of spirituality when this story of Hannah takes place.



### **Who was this shattered woman?**

Let's look at who Hannah was. One interesting thing is that she was one of two wives. Her husband's name was Elkanah. Hannah was barren and couldn't have children. Her husband's other wife wasn't, so this caused a lot of pain for Hannah which we will see in her story. In the end she does have a son, but it was a heartbreaking journey getting there, and tough decisions were waiting when Hannah did have her child.

### **Hannah was longing for motherhood with a barren womb.**

First, we will talk about Hannah's biggest obstacle or what was the thing that loomed so heavily on her mind. I guess we all have times when we have something that

takes over that is always on our mind. Why does that happen? It's because those things become so important to us that we can't think about anything else.

For Hannah, it was bearing a child. Her infertility was the thing that shattered her the most. She wanted so badly to have a baby. Look at her situation. The culture at the time said it was important. It was especially important to have a boy baby. Also, Hannah was married to a man who had two wives. There was Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah was over there having some babies and living up motherhood while Hannah was longing in her heart to bear a child.

That must have weighed so heavily on Hannah that her body wasn't doing what it should have. Her womb was closed up. Hannah couldn't conceive.

*"... the LORD had shut up her womb." 1 Samuel 1:6*

Sometimes when we as women have health issues it causes us so many questions. Whether it is about infertility or some other thing that isn't working in our body or a sickness. These kind of things make us feel such vexation and unrest. We begin to question why this thing is happening to us and our bodies. We sometimes even question God about it.

### **Life isn't always fair and Hannah found this out in a big way.**

Let's take a quick look at this shattered women's troubles. She isn't a mom yet, but she will be. We know the end of her story, but as she was living it, Hannah didn't know if she would ever have a child.

So, we've seen that Hannah was barren and couldn't conceive and she had to live with the other wife that could bear children. That's bad enough, but do you know what kind of a woman that other wife, Peninnah, was? Yep! If you know this story, you know she was a provoker.

*"And her adversary also provoked her sore..." 1 Samuel 1:6*

Someone that provokes other people are just plain hurtful for no reason. They gloat! These kind of people go around trying to make people mad, angry, or frustrated. They want others to feel as bad as they can. That's what Peninnah did to Hannah. We will see this a little bit as we talk about a trip these women and their husband took together.

## **Other wives don't make good road trip companions.**

When we look at 1 Samuel chapter 1, we see that Hannah's husband, Elkanah, went up to the city of Shiloh to worship once a year. Elkanah took his wives with him. It was a family road trip to the temple every year. I'm not sure how far this was from their home, but no matter how far, it must have seemed like an endless journey to Hannah who had to deal with her husband's other wife each trip. The Bible calls Peninnah an "adversary" in 1 Samuel 1:6, so in essence Hannah was taking a road trip with the enemy.

One of the things that happened at this time was that Hannah's husband gave portions or blessings to his wives and his children. One thing about Elkanah that we know is that the Bible says that he loved Hannah. When he gave Hannah her portion, he gave her a "worthy" portion. He gave her more than he did Peninnah.

*"And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb." 1 Samuel 1:4-5*

How do you think that other wife, Peninnah, reacted to this? I mentioned that she was a provoker, so here comes that provoking.

*"And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat." 1 Samuel 6-7*

We see that Hannah had to endure some things from Peninnah. It looks like this was a yearly trip and that the outcome was the same each time. So, this behavior directed at Hannah wasn't something that just happened once. I'm sure Hannah kept saying on the way home each time, "Are we there yet?"

How about you? Ever had someone in your life that just wanted to provoke you on a continual basis? Maybe a boss or a coworker? Maybe someone in school? Maybe even a family member? Let's just hope you have never had another wife to deal with.

This kind of behavior where someone tries to push your buttons, tries to engage you into a response, or tries to get your goat, can really make you feel so stressed out. This is what Peninnah did to Hannah. We saw earlier that the Bible calls her Hannah's "adversary" in 1 Samuel 1:6.

It's so sad that Peninnah had to push Hannah's buttons over the very fact that she couldn't bear children. Basically teasing and harassing a woman because she was infertile! That's just so disturbing to me. This is definitely something that can shatter a person.

## **Hannah found herself on an emotional roller-coaster called the *Trauma Train* and Peninnah was sitting smugly at the controls.**

As we read down through 1 Samuel, we can see some of the reactions that Hannah had to the torment she suffered from Peninnah. She was human and couldn't help but react to the strain.

- It made Hannah "fret". (1 Samuel 1:6)
- It made Hannah cry. (1 Samuel 1:7)
- It made her not want to eat. (1 Samuel 1:7)
- It grieved her heart. (1 Samuel 1:8)

Just image all the emotional trauma this situation caused Hannah. It sounds like this was all taking a toll on her. As women we can probably all relate to all these reactions in some way. That word "fret" means to devour yourself with worry.

When we start worrying, it can play a big role on wearing us down, especially where our health is concerned.

On top of the worry, Hannah was having some good cries. She was weeping. Have you ever cried so much that it just hurt from crying? I feel this is the kind of crying Hannah was doing. It makes you feel so helpless and weak to cry like that.

I'm sure we have all had times when we were worrying and being bothered so much that it affected our appetite. Some people even go long times without eating and lose weight when they are bogged down with worry and discontent over something.

What about having a heart that is grieving? Hannah wanted a child so bad and the provoking from Peninnah I'm sure didn't help. Hannah's heart must have been at such a raw and emotional state.

I want to insert here that one of the reactions I don't see Hannah having here was lashing out at Peninnah. She didn't do that. Hannah didn't get angry. She didn't cuss Peninnah out. She didn't have a cat fight with her. She didn't go talk bad about her. She didn't tell Peninnah how to raise her kids. She didn't tell Peninnah her kids were worthless and wouldn't amount to anything. She didn't say mean things and try to get under Peninnah's skin. She didn't have any of those negative reactions like some women would have.

One of the things I like about this story is that Hannah's husband, Elkanah did try to comfort her. We saw in 1 Samuel 1:5 that he loved her. He even gave her more of a portion than his wife, Peninnah.

*“Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?” 1 Samuel 1:8*

## **Hannah pushed through her affliction and went to her knees.**

Hannah is known for her prayer, so of course we are going to talk about that today. What a prayer it was! Every time I read through this prayer, I think, wow. I need

to learn to pray better. This shattered woman, hurting and in pain, knew how to pray.

*“So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.” 1 Samuel 1:9-15*

I really hope you go back and read that whole chapter of 1 Samuel 1. I’ve put the verses above that includes Hannah’s prayer, but to get the whole context of everything, you really do need to read the whole thing to put it all in perspective.

Let’s break this prayer down of how Hannah prayed.

- Her prayer was with bitterness of soul. (1 Samuel 1:10)
- Her prayer was with weeping. (1 Samuel 1:10)
- Her prayer contained a vow or promise. (1 Samuel 1:11)
- Her prayer with was persistence. She “continued in prayer”. (1 Samuel 1:12)
- Her prayer was from her heart. (1 Samuel 1:13)
- Her prayer was a pouring out of her soul. (1 Samuel 1:16)
- Her prayer was out of grief. (1 Samuel 1:16)

## **Hannah made a promise that she planned on keeping.**

Let’s talk quickly about this vow that Hannah made in her prayer to God. This

wasn't just something she said just to say or make her prayer sound good. Vows were serious things! Vows to God were not taken lightly. They were binding obligations.

What was the vow? Hannah was going to give her son over to be raised by the priest as a Nazirite. If you aren't familiar with what that was, they devoted themselves to a special service to God. Those who committed to it gave themselves to God and made themselves ready and available for whatever God wanted for their life.

Nazarites had certain rules they followed. They couldn't touch dead bodies, couldn't drink wine, and couldn't cut their hair. I'm not really sure of all the things entailed, but in general, it was a strict code of conduct and behavior that they had to submit to.

Let me say that vows scare me. I went through infertility after my first child. My oldest was thirteen when my second daughter was born. All that time I longed like Hannah did, but there is no way I would make a vow to God like she did. That is so scary. It is so serious.

Making a vow to the God of the Universe requires some deep dedication. He is the ruler and maker of all things. It's such a commitment and dedication of such magnificent proportions. Check out Deuteronomy 23:21-23 and Ecclesiastes 5:5-7 when you have time. That vow business is some serious stuff!

But here was Hannah, progressing and taking a journey to be a mother, and making a binding obligation with the one and true God. He is the God of love but also of wrath too. This woman had some determination.

### **Hannah longed and prayed for a child that she was willing to give up for God's glory.**

It's so interesting to me that Hannah longed and waited for a child. She endured all that provoking from Peninnah, her husband's other wife. She was getting older year after year. She wanted that child more than anything. Yet, she would be willing to give that child over to the Lord to be raised in the temple if God saw fit to bless her.

That's so amazing to me. I'm not sure if I could have done it. This woman may have

had some shattering. She may have had some grief to bear, but this woman was strong. She had a determination that can't be underestimated.

### **Hannah didn't stay in the hurt after her prayer.**

I see in this passage that after Hannah left all her worries and all her petitions with the Lord, that she didn't stay in her hurt. I know women that do that. I've seen it. Staying in the hurt isn't good for anyone. It doesn't matter what it is, whether it is the hurt of infertility, the loss of a loved one, or the pain and suffering of everyday life. We have to learn to get past pain. We have to rely on the Lord to help us deal with what comes along and shatters us in our lives.

Look at the last part of verse 18 of 1 Samuel 1, after Eli the priest told Hannah to go her way in peace. This was after she had finished praying.

*"...So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." 1 Samuel 1:18.*

What a reaction! Hannah went on her way. She ate. She didn't have that long face anymore. She rested in God.

### **Hannah hopped off the emotional *Trauma Train* and ended up on the *Blessing Express*.**

God saw fit to bless Hannah with a child as she had asked from the longing of her heart. She had her son, Samuel. Can you imagine what joy she must have felt? After wanting a child for so long God blessed her with a baby boy. And look at blessing on top of blessings! Hannah was blessed with more children down the road.

*"And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD." 1 Samuel 2:21*



## **Hannah kept her word and was devoted to her duty.**

We see that Hannah planned on keeping her vow to God. When it was time for that family trip to the temple again, look what Hannah said to her husband.

*“But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.” 1 Samuel 1:22*

Then a few more verses down, she carries out what she said she would do. After Samuel was weaned, she made that trip to the temple and left Samuel with the priest to be raised. Look what it says in the last couple verses of that chapter.

*“For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.” 1 Samuel 1:27-28*

This must have been so hard! We all know how just leaving our children in daycare or that first day of Kindergarten can be more stressful on the parent than the child. I can remember when my kids would go away just to camp for a week. It killed me! Just think about how having to leave your child in another town to be raised by someone else was for Hannah. It must have been so difficult for her. She didn't get to tuck him in bed every night or any of those loving things that makes being a mom so pleasurable.

Hannah gave up so much as a mother, but I love how by Hannah doing what she did, the world became a better place. When I introduced her to you I told you a little bit about the situation at the time. Eli was in charge of the temple and he had some wicked sons that were stirring up trouble. When Samuel, this beautiful blessing of Hannah's prayer, grows up to become a man, we start to see a shift. We start to see a whole nation turning towards God. Through Samuel law and order is restored. We never know how we play a part in history. Hannah did her part so her son could do his part in God's big plan.

## **Hannah took the journey from longing to rejoicing.**

Hannah's story doesn't end here. She had some praying, praising, and rejoicing to do. I am not going to list out all ten of those verses in the next chapter of 1 Samuel where Hannah gives her prayer of praise to God, but let's look at some of the things that I find interesting in it.

- Hannah was thankful. (the theme of the whole prayer of praise)
- Hannah prayed this prayer with a rejoicing heart. (1 Samuel 2:1)
- Hannah recognizes God is holy. (1 Samuel 2:2)
- Hannah recognizes the strength of God (1 Samuel 2:2)
- Hannah recognizes the knowledge of God. (1 Samuel 2:3)
- Hannah recognizes God is in control. (1 Samuel 2:6-8)
- Hannah recognizes that God will lead us. (1 Samuel 2:9)
- Hannah recognizes that God wins over the wicked. (1 Samuel 2:10)

I'm sure I didn't hit everything. There is so much packed into this prayer of praise from Hannah to God for blessing her with a son.

## **We can learn from this shattered woman's story.**

I think there are so many lessons we can learn from Hannah—this shattered woman who had so much longing in her heart. I think of how Hannah didn't lash out at Peninnah, even with how annoying it must have been to put up with her harassment. That's a big lesson to learn just in that itself.

Another thing I think is so important is that Hannah took her longing to the Lord. She made it a matter of prayer. She took advantage of something she did have control of. She didn't have control of her husband's other wife. She didn't have control of her womb, but Hannah had control of her prayer life.

Sure, Hannah hurt. She cried. She grieved. She even went without eating. What is so wonderful to me is that she didn't stay there! She didn't remain in the hurt of her infertility. She didn't remain in the hurt of being the target of Peninnah's

provocation. No, Hannah moved on. She proceeded to take her troubles to the Lord.

What's fantastic is that she did it with such a vibrant prayer! I see this as determination by this shattered woman. This woman, who was down and out and probably at the end of her rope, decided that going to the Lord with a prayer and a vow was the answer to her troubles.

I know God doesn't bless every woman who has a longing in their heart to be a mother. He doesn't always bless every woman that makes it a matter of prayer. It just doesn't always happen. It just isn't always God's plan. We need to pray and encourage women in this situation.

Let me say that I don't think we encourage them by just ignoring the problem or by being overly sensitive to them. I see the trend of some to make Mother's Day about all women just because there are hurting women who have an issue with motherhood. That isn't the answer. That just pushes their problems aside for a brief moment. It isn't helping anyone, especially those women in pain. If Mother's Day hurts them on such a level as that, then they need real help. They need prayer. They need counseling. They need to learn to rely on the Lord. They need to build their faith.

As other Christian women, we need to build up these women who are in the hurt. Staying in the hurt causes bitterness. I don't think Hannah could have prayed the prayer she did or vowed the vow she did if all she did year after year was stay in the hurt. It's not a way to live.

I am disturbed that some Christian women who are in the hurt of infertility or in the hurt of the loss of a mother or of a child thinks that they have a free pass if they develop bitterness. No. It doesn't work that way. It doesn't matter what drives a person to sin, whether it is a raw and hurting heart or what it is. We can't stay in that hurt. We have to learn better ways to deal. That's why I think getting up close and digging through Hannah's story is so important. She was living there but moved on by leaving her heavy heart in the Lord's hands.

Another lesson I learn from Hannah is that you do what you say you are going to do. She kept her promise to God. She did her duty with Samuel and when it was time,

she took him to the temple to stay with the priest like she said she would. All in all, that allowed God's whole big plan to come together for a nation.

One of the important things that I see in Hannah's story is that she didn't forget to praise the God that brought her through. She didn't forget that God was doing the blessing in her life. I love how this woman went from shattered to praising God.



What shattered Hannah?

What was Peninnah's attitude toward Hannah?

How do you think this made Hannah feel?

What did Hannah do about her shattered circumstances?

What lesson (s) did you learn from studying about Hannah?

*Dear Lord,*

*Help me to see that when I have a longing in my heart that it is You that I must give it over to. It is You that will ease my pain and comfort me, whether you answer my prayers the way I want or not. Help me to learn to pray with a vibrancy like Hannah. And most of all Lord, help me to rest in Your will and praise You no matter what the outcome.*

*Amen*