

Living the Sacrificial Life V

Mothers: A Life of Sacrifice and Reward

1 Samuel 1:1-15

Background

Hannah had lived her life in a complicated situation. She was married to a man who loved her dearly, yet she had to share him with a second wife. She dealt with both the private and public judgment and ridicule over her barrenness. From a societal aspect, barrenness was most often seen as a judgment and a curse from God, pointing to some area of sin or displeasure in the person. This could have been handled to a point, if there was not so much of a private barrage of insult and provocation from Peninnah

And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her (to enrage 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 – 1 Samuel 1:6-7

The character of motherhood Hannah displayed in her struggle: Endurance

The other struggle that this brought in Hannah's life was acknowledging the love of her husband. The time of going to the house of the Lord was supposed to be a special time; a time of family and appreciation for all that God had given. For Hannah, however, it was only a reminder that she was not favored by God, which manifested itself in her relationship with Elkanah

Elkanah 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?"

As much as Hannah loved her husband, she was not going to be satisfied until she fulfilled what she knew her life purpose was: having children

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed .But if it dies, it produces many seeds. – John 12:24

μῑνος (monos) translated "a single seed" actually defined means: **alone (without a companion); forsaken; destitute of help; alone; only; merely**

When we are not able to fulfill our life's purpose (aka, being the seed in full process), we suffer feelings of forsakenness, destitution, and being alone even when there are others around us who may be showing us love

Hannah's Vow

Hannah made a vow that most of us would either not dare to do, or would have trouble keeping once it was made.

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" – I Samuel 1:11

Usually the strength of our vows is determined upon the giving of the desire. When Herod was so struck with Herodias' daughter's dance, he promised her anything, up to half of his kingdom, but when she asked for the head of John the Baptist, he did everything he could to get out of it (Mark 6:16-26). Hannah, however, had no thought of turning back on her vow.

How could Hannah have prayed/vowed?

- Revenge against her rival:

...Then Rachel said "God has vindicated me: He has listened to my plea and given me a son..." – Genesis 30:6

- A son that she did not have to give away

Hannah's vow was not so she could be a selfish mother, but so she could fulfill her purpose and put into her son the best gift she could bestow.

The character of motherhood Hannah displayed in her vow: Faithfulness

Not the kind of faithfulness that we think of in the western world that stops with the receiving of a gift, but the faithfulness that goes the extra mile, that looks beyond oneself.

A Blessing Received, Before It Was Received

Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief. Eli answered, "Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him". – I Samuel 1:16-17

In the midst of the crowd, Eli noticed Hannah as she prayed, and assumed from her actions that she was drunk. He was ready to dismiss her altogether, and basically did, but Hannah was not going to give in that easy. However, she doesn't lash out, but responds in a way that prompts a very different response from Eli

The character of motherhood Hannah displayed in her response: Gentleness

Notice, that she never told Eli what her prayer was, why she was in such anguish. Eli knew nothing about her, whether she was single, married or widowed, rich or poor. Eli was not responding to her out of a deep sense of what God was doing in her life, but was giving her the "pat answer" that so many of us receive in our prayers. Even if Hannah had told Eli her heart's desire, he could not fully understand

because he would never be in that position *to want to be a mother*. Hannah, however, did not take this as just a brush off, but as an initiation for joy

She said "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went away and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. – I Samuel 1:18

The character of motherhood Hannah displayed in her receiving: Joy

Hannah had nothing but the dismissing words of the High Priest, but they sparked something in her that brought her closer to the fulfillment of her life's goal – to be a mother. God also was not going to allow the High Priest's words to be the final authority in the matter, but He would pay attention to her to fulfill her desire.

...Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife and the Lord remembered her" – I Samuel 1:19b

A Life of Sacrifice

Hannah's story does not end with the birth of her son, for there is still the fulfillment of the vow. Notice, that Hannah is not facing this vow with dread, but with sheer determination. She is not thinking of what she will lose in her sacrifice, but what Samuel will gain.

When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, 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" – I Samuel 1:21-22

Hannah looked forward to the day when she could fulfill her vow to the Lord. Remember, the definition for sacrifice is *the surrender or destruction of something prized or desirable for the sake of something considered as having a higher or more pressing claim*. For Hannah, what **her child could be was more important than what her child was**

The character of motherhood Hannah displayed in her keeping her vow: Love

A Life of Reward

Hannah had no guarantee that her son would grow up to be a "Samuel". That was an extra added blessing, but not the reward she sought, nor the actual reward she received. The reward was being able to *give Samuel the ability to be all that he could be in God*

It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. – III John 3:1-3

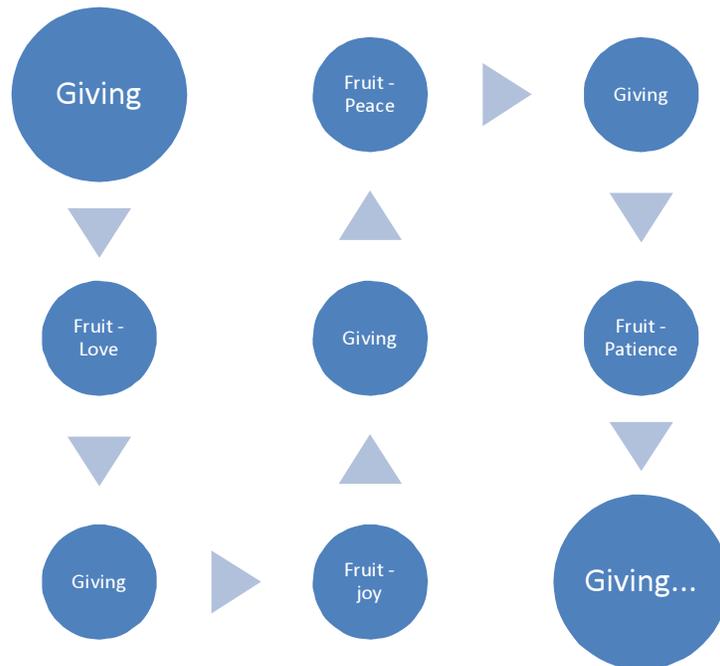
Typically we think of reward as being the end of the process:



For Hannah, we can see that there were rewards through the entire process. The rewards were categorized as *Fruit of the spirit*

Love	Joy	Peace
Patience	Kindness	Goodness
Faithfulness	Gentleness	Self Control

For Hannah and us, it is a constant cycle of giving/sacrifice and fruit being borne, producing more giving/sacrifice



Because she lived to give to another, she was constantly being the seed sown. It was not a formulaic or forced thing but a natural process for her. Fruit was borne, not manufactured, and fruit always carries the seed for more fruit inside it.

Summary

Hannah serves as an example of motherhood, and how mothers constantly live a life of sacrifice. Even when we don't give honor to mothers or notice what is going on, it doesn't stop the fruit from being borne from the sacrifice, new life coming from their unselfish acts, and fruit that will remain and produce many seeds. We can all learn from mothers not just how to be better mothers, but better people, how to live a sacrificial life every day, and how we can touch the lives of those around us for the better.