

Hannah: A Woman Who Prayed Boldly

Message 1 of 5 in the series: "Stories to Make Us Bold!"

A. Hannah boldly sought God's help during her greatest time of need.

"Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not. Each year Elkanah would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of Heaven's Armies at the Tabernacle. The priests of the Lord at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas." 1 Samuel 1:2-3 (NLT)

Note: Hannah boldly turned to God for help during a time when many people in her culture were turning away from God. "In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."
Judges 21:25 (NLT)

"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. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. Because the Lord had closed Hannah's 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. Her husband 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?' Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, 'Lord Almighty, if you will only look on **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.' 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. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, 'How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.' '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. 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.' 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." 1 Samuel 1:4-18 (NIV)

Note: The Holy Spirit helps us pray when we don't know what to pray. "...the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will." Romans 8:26b-27 (NLT)

Life Application: If we boldly bring our troubles to God rather than try to handle things by ourselves, He will give us help, mercy, and grace when we need it most!

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. **So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God.** There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Hebrews 4:15-16 (NLT)

B. Hannah boldly honored her vow to the Lord.

"The entire family got up early the next morning and went to worship the Lord once more. Then they returned home to Ramah. When Elkanah slept with Hannah, the Lord remembered her plea, and in due time she gave birth to a son. **She named him Samuel, for she said, 'I asked the Lord for him.'** The next year Elkanah and his family went on their annual trip to offer a sacrifice to the Lord and to keep his vow. But Hannah did not go. She told her husband, 'Wait until the boy is weaned. Then I will take him to the Tabernacle and leave him there with the Lord permanently.' 'Whatever you think is best,' Elkanah agreed. 'Stay here for now, and **may the Lord help you keep your promise.**' So she stayed home and nursed the boy until he was weaned. When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They brought along a three-year-old bull for the sacrifice and a basket of flour and some wine. After sacrificing the bull, they brought the boy to Eli. 'Sir, do you remember me?' Hannah asked. 'I am the very woman who stood here several years ago praying to the Lord. **I asked the Lord to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life.**' And they worshiped the Lord there." 1 Samuel 1:19-28 (NLT)

Note: Hannah had prayed for a child who she could surrender to the Lord for his whole life. She saw herself as the Lord's servant. "Mary responded, 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.'" Luke 1:38a (NLT)

Note: Praying for God to use us and our children for His purposes is NOT the same as praying for God to bless us and make us happy. "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. **Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.**" Luke 22:42 (NLT)

Note: We cannot manipulate God with rash vows and promises. "When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it." Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 (NLT)

C. Even though Hannah returned home without the son she had pleaded with God to give her, she boldly praised the Lord.

"Then Hannah prayed: '**My heart rejoices in the Lord!** The Lord has made me strong. Now I have an answer for my enemies; **I rejoice because you rescued me.** No one is holy like the Lord! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Stop acting so proud and haughty! Don't speak with such arrogance! For the Lord is a God who knows what you have done; he will judge your actions... He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump. He sets them among princes, placing them in seats of honor. For all the earth is the Lord's, and he has set the world in order. **He will protect his faithful ones,** but the wicked will disappear in darkness. No one will succeed by strength alone. Those who fight against the Lord will be shattered. He thunders against them from heaven; the Lord judges throughout the earth. He gives power to his king; he increases the strength of his anointed one.' Then Elkanah returned home to Ramah without Samuel. And the boy served the Lord by assisting Eli the priest... Samuel, though he was only a boy, served the Lord. He wore a linen garment like that of a priest. Each year his mother made a small coat for him and brought it to him when she came with her husband for the sacrifice. Before they returned home, Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, 'May the Lord give you other children to take the place of this one she gave to the Lord.' And the Lord blessed Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters." 1 Samuel 2:1-3, 8-11, & 18-21(NLT)

Life Application: Boldly surrendering all of our problems/needs/fears/heartaches to the Lord allows us to experience God's love, joy, and peace no matter our circumstances.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. **Then you will experience God's peace,** which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." Philipians 4:6-7 (NLT)

"Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be **thankful in all circumstances,** for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read 1 Samuel 1 & 2:1-11 & 18-21. Then discuss the following questions:

1. Describe a time in your life when you felt like God had forgotten all about you. What did you do? What did Hannah do?
2. Discuss the following statements about prayer:
 - The Holy Spirit helps us pray when we don't know what to pray. (Romans 8:26-27)
 - If we boldly bring our troubles to God rather than try to handle things by ourselves, He will give us help, mercy, and grace when we need it most! (Hebrews 4:15-16)
 - We cannot manipulate God with rash vows and promises. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)
 - Boldly surrendering every problem/need/fear/heartache to the Lord allows us to experience God's love, joy, and peace no matter our circumstances. (Philipians 4:6-7)

How would you describe your prayer life right now?

3. If you were put in Hannah's place, would you have handed over little Samuel to be raised by an old priest? Has God ever asked you to surrender something that was very important to you? How did you respond?

4. What's the difference between being God's servant and asking God to serve us? Why do we often get things backward in prayer? (Luke 1:38 & 22:42)
5. How can the following verses help us be more bold and confident in our prayers?
 - Psalm 34:18-19
 - 1 Peter 5:7
 - Isaiah 26:3
 - John 14:27
6. Spend some time as a group praying for our church. Ask God to make us bold in our prayers. Also ask Him to help us trust Him more so that others will recognize that we have genuine faith. (Psalm 37:23-24)