

Mother's Day Message

May 9th, 2021 | Pastor Al & Tava Brice

We recognize, today, all of the mothers, grandmothers, and family members as you have navigated the troubles and challenges these past 14 months. We especially commend the Moms for valuing their role to nurture and assist their children by calming their fears, helping them to continue to learn, trying to explain why a culture has grown so corrupt and violent, why bad things can happen to good people, teaching them the reality of a real devil, but pointing them to the love and faithfulness of God. Many Mothers and Grandmothers instantly became homeschool instructors and helped their children grapple with the grief of losing contact with friends and confusion about the isolation and the fear they've sensed in the world around them.

You've helped them learn how to remain patient with new ways of learning and the wearing of masks. You've taught them how to honor and protect others by maintaining distance in public and helped them over the hurdles of missing graduations and family celebrations. You've shared a balance of wisdom and counsel without allowing them to succumb to fear. Moms, you've done well. We commend your perseverance to maintain faith in God's plan and His Word to guide you and give your family hope so you will keep dreaming and believe in a future despite having no clear path forward in the natural.

Speaking of continuing to dream and perseverance, let's talk about a mom in the Bible that went through some very tough and challenging times but never gave up on her dream. Her name is Hannah and we find her in I Samuel 1. She was barren, no children but she kept believing and praying.

1 Samuel 1:4-5 (AMPC)

"When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give to Peninnah his wife and all her sons and daughters portions [of the sacrificial meat]. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the Lord had given her no children."

Elkanah loved her (he was her godly support system) and he took special measures to comfort her in her disappointment by reminding her of his love (more than 10 sons) and gifting her with a double portion of his priestly provision allotted to him and to his family compared to the single portion he gave to Peninnah and her sons and daughters. He never mentally abused or mocked her.

But he had taken another wife and that was acceptable in that time because of a cultural norm and Jewish tradition. He had the desire to honor God's command to multiply and fill the earth. But there was also a religious mindset that the childless were suspected of having displeased God in some way or even cursed by God.

It is such a blessing to be in a community of encouragement. Having a loving and supportive husband is truly a gift. Hannah's husband Elkanah was one such exemplary husbands. Even so, Hannah (like all of us) have personal challenges that weigh heavily on our hearts. The end of verse 5 reveals hers... "the Lord had given her no children."

Let's read for more details:

1 Samuel 1:6-10 (AMPC)

"[This embarrassed and grieved Hannah] and her rival (Peninnah) provoked her greatly to vex (or we would say to upset) her, because the Lord had left her childless. So it was year after

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year; whenever Hannah went up to the Lord's house, Peninnah provoked her, so she wept and did not eat. Then Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why do you cry? And why do you not eat? And why are you grieving? Am I not more to you than ten sons? So Hannah rose after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest (think Pastor AI, or Bishop TD Jakes or Billy Graham) was sitting on his seat beside a post of the temple (tent) of the Lord. And [Hannah] was in distress of soul, praying to the Lord and weeping bitterly."

Hannah lived for years with a vast stressor to her ultimate dream that no other blessing in her life could fill. In her case, her nemesis had a name. It was Peninnah — Elkanah's other wife. The truth is, we all have rivals to our dreams. It may be a co-worker, a jealous "friend or relative. It may be our own expectations of what we think our lives should be. Our Peninnah may be social media with a stream of images depicting women living our Dream. And this has gone on for years. It is distressing. We may weep bitterly. We may despair of ever overcoming.

Let's look back at scripture to see what Hannah does:

1 Samuel 1:11-18 (AMPC)

"She vowed, saying, O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid and [earnestly] remember, and not forget Your handmaid but will give me a son, I will give him to the Lord all his life; no razor shall touch his head. And as she continued praying before the Lord, Eli noticed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Eli said to her, How long will you be intoxicated? Put wine away from you. But Hannah answered, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I was pouring out my soul before the Lord. Regard not your handmaid as a wicked woman; for out of my great complaint and bitter provocation I have been speaking. Then Eli said, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him. Hannah said, Let your handmaid find grace in your sight. So [she] went her way and ate, her countenance no longer sad."

She poured out the depths of her heart to the only One who could fulfill her desires. In her seeking, she found Him and His heart for what was planned before she ever longed for a child. Her people would desperately need a mighty spiritual leader in the coming years.

1 Samuel 1:19 (AMPC)

"The family rose early the next morning, worshiped before the Lord, and returned to their home in Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. (This does not suggest that God was not aware of her existence but that He heard her prayer acted upon her request.)"

Here's what we know:

Samuel himself is credited with writing the historical account of his ministry journey in I Samuel. He shares as a pivotal godly influential leader whose absence would have been catastrophic to God's people during his lifetime. In I Samuel, we discover how his leadership guided Israel through grave corruption and lack of responsible leadership in the central place of worship. He interceded before God for Israel when they insisted on having a King though he knew the calamity it would cause. He tried to remind the people that their God wanted to reign justly over them and warned them that an earthly king would demand that their children served the King and die in battles and collect taxes. He followed God's instruction to give them what they were insisting on, by locating and ordaining Saul as their 1st King.

For years, Samuel endeavored to counsel Saul who eventually succumbed to pride and disobedience. Samuel was present to facilitate Israel's transition to King David which resulted in decades of godly impact on Israel.

All of this can be traced to the fact that Samuel was miraculously born. Samuel could have just described how he was mentored as he served God in the temple in Shiloh but instead, he shares great detail about how he came to be born and subsequently given to be given to God's service as early as he was. He details his godly Father's great love for God in faithfully worshipping Him and leading his family to do likewise. He shared how his Dad endeavored to comfort his mom Hannah throughout the years (according to Jewish tradition, 10 years would have passed while the happy couple attempted to get pregnant to no avail) How he intentionally gave a double portion of the ministry blessing he received but that his mom Hannah was deeply grieved, embarrassed that even after additional years of a second wife having at least 2 sons and 2 daughters she remained childless.

* Prevailing over the Peninnah's in our lives.

God intends to provide our heart's desire;

John 16:24 (AMPC)

“Up to this time you have not asked a [single] thing in My Name [as-presenting all that I AM]; but now ask and keep on asking and you will receive, so that your joy (gladness, delight) may be full and complete.)”

Which most definitely includes the critical importance of our children's impact on the world as they take their place in the Kingdom of God. As we approach the end of the age we must recognize the voice of God as Hannah did even as she cried out for children in the temple. As she wept before God, He inspired her ask for a son to dedicate to His service. She knew she would nurse him and have him with her until he could be weaned but planned all along to return to Shiloh with a cow and flour offerings and wine as well as her own son. We find the High Priest Eli receiving Samuel with gratitude knowing what a great gift his mother was entrusting him with. She continued to come each year with a new coat for Samuel to grow into. As he matured in his relationship with God and in his dedication to serve Him; he also was reminded that he wasn't abandoned and orphaned but that he was a son with adoring parents who believed he was to be set apart for God's glory.

I love Hannah's prayer at Samuel's dedication. She praised God for his faithfulness to her personally and to all those who live godly lives. She honored how He redeemed situations and provided miracles for the righteous. In her final words, she actually declared prophetically how

1 Samuel 2:10 (AMPC)

“The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them will He thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge [all peoples] to the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king (King) and exalt the power of His anointed (Anointed His Christ).”

Her perseverance to press into God's faithfulness rather than to cave into Peninnah's persecution yielded an excellent spirit that was one with the Father's heart. We have that same opportunity today. We can scroll through images on social media that seem to boast of perfect lives that hold what we long for or we can seek God with all of our hearts and respond as He directs us.

Today, church leadership's role is to agree with the faith of those whose fervent prayers are in accordance with God's Word. Not only did Eli ask God to honor her prayers but as he received Samuel into his care and over the years Hannah and Elkanah came to worship, he continued to speak blessings over their legacy. In addition to Samuel, the couple was blessed with 3 sons and 2 daughters.

As brothers and sisters in Christ; we are admonished to:

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (AMPC)

"Therefore encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another, just as you are doing."

Moms, Grandmoms, spiritual moms.... the wisest of Kings, King Solomon, offers us this counsel that his mother gave him:

Proverbs 23:17-18 (AMPC)

"Let not your heart envy sinners but continue in the reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is a latter end [a future and a reward], and your hope and expectation shall not be cut off."