

Series: **Godly Transitions in Life** – week 3

CDOBC – beginning on 1/8/17

Today's Title: **"When Change Hurts"**

(Hannah & her son, Samuel)

January 22, 2017 ~ 1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:11

OBJECTIVE: To help believers trust God through painful times of change.

Opening Prayer

Most of us avoid painful things. We learn at an early age not to touch a hot stove - use caution not to burn your mouth with hot beverage - drink Ices slow to prevent brain freeze - hitting our thumb with a hammer - going on blind dates.

Freud called it "The Pleasure Principle", which said we instinctually seek our pleasure and avoid pain.

When I was a kid, I chipped my front teeth numerous times. Each time I went to the dentist to get the chipped tooth repaired, the dentist would ask if I wanted a shot of Novocain so I wouldn't feel the pain.

Each time I said 'NO'. I couldn't imagine a needle going into my gums. In my young mind, the pain of the needle was greater than the pain of the dentist working on my chipped tooth - even when he would hit the nerve.

I had my first cavity in my early 40's - and I finally had my first Novocain shot. Amazing! I never felt the needle!

Sometimes, a new thing brings pain into our life.

Sometimes our fears can prevent us from accepting something new which would be good for us.

Sometimes God calls us to something new - and it will be painful - the change will hurt.

And sometimes the result of change is way more difficult than we ever imagined.

- We've been losing weight for 3 months - we're 10 lbs. away from our goal...and we hit a wall - even gain a few pounds.
- It's been 6 weeks since you had a cigarette - but now the cravings have come back with intensity - and you're not sure you can hold out.
- You're trying to make better choices - which means new friends and new ways of having fun on the weekends... but you're having trouble finding new friends and you're not sure how to have fun in a way that doesn't include your old choices.

Change is not an easy process...but when we're changing from '*bad to good*'...or even '*good to better*' things - it's worth it.

When we're following God's leading and He's changing things in our life - or in the church - it's not always easy...but it's worth it!

Some changes God brings into your life are not only difficult - they hurt!!

Turn to the book of **1 Samuel** as we look at the painful side of change - the life of Hannah.

Hannah was barren - and as a result she was heartbroken.

She prayed to God and asked the Lord to give her a child.

When she prayed for this, she also made a vow to God - she vowed to give her son to the LORD “...for all the days of his life” (1:11).

When God blessed her with a son - she kept her vow.

But how difficult do you think this was? How much did that hurt?

Once again, as we read an account of someone in the Bible, it's very easy to read through the facts and events of their life, and discount or never consider their humanity - the human struggle and emotions which were no doubt part of the process.

Hannah is a great example of God answering prayer - but the promise within the prayer included a very difficult thing - a change which would test Hannah's faith and her integrity to the Lord. This morning I want us to look at the account of Hannah - and see what we can learn about her and how she stayed faithful to her promise - even when it hurt.

When we begin reading in **1 Samuel** we are given the setting and family situation Hannah is in.

Read 1:1-2

We're introduced to Hannah's family and they are unimportant and unknown. They are not celebrities - they are not royalty - they are average people living out each day of their life. Elkanah seems to be a wealthy man as the details of the text will reveal, but other than having some money, nothing makes them stand out.

We see two problems - the first problem is in the first words of vs. 2 - "He had two wives".

This was not uncommon in ancient times - men of wealth were able to provide for two wives and a larger family - but this is outside of God's will and it always led to some sort of difficulty - as it does here.

The primary problem is at the end of vs. 2, "...but Hannah had no children." This is what Hannah wants to change - this is what she will ask God to change.

Elkanah's practice and preference 1:3-5

Elkanah has two shortcomings we read about in this chapter. The first was having 2 wives - the second, I believe, is emotional and relational incompetence.

Beyond these, Elkanah is a man whose practice is to worship God - he is a believer.

Their annual trip to Shiloh to worship and bring sacrifices to the LORD doesn't seem to be connected to any of the major religious feasts - but they seem to be their practice in addition to these other celebrations.

We also see his preference for Hannah over Peninnah. It's likely he married Peninnah after he realized Hannah's inability to have children, so his marriage to Peninnah was not out of love - but of pragmatism. In vs. 5 his love and preference for Hannah is highlighted - and this is likely what led to the next point:

The problem of Peninnah's provoking 1:6-8

My guess is Elkanah's greater love for Hannah was obvious, and Peninnah was hurt by this, so she struck out at Hannah with the cruelty of her words.

Hannah was provoked to tears by Peninnah's constant taunting and reminding of her barren state.

vs. 7 says this happened "year by year". Every year they made the trip to Shiloh, Peninnah would provoke Hannah and remind her of the greatest pain in her life - her inability to have children - while Peninnah's kids were running all over the place.

This is where we see Elkanah's relational disability.

For all the good marks we can give Elkanah for his faith in God and his practice of going above and beyond the worship and sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law, he was not the most sensitive or understanding guy.

Was he aware of Peninnah's taunting of Hannah?

Was he unable to know when Hannah was distraught to the point of tears?

Then in vs. 8, he doesn't improve the reputation (deserved?) men have as being emotionally and relationally clueless and incompetent.

And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

No! You're not!

Men...you know this...but after this taunting going on "year by year", if you have to ask your wife "why do you weep?" - you're already in trouble!

Then we see Hannah beginning to bring a change into her life. A change she hopes will happen - but it's out of her control - God must do a miracle!

Hannah's petition and promise to God. 1:9-11

Don't lose the human element in her prayer. She is willing to let go of the one thing she wants more than anything else in life!

Some of you here have a son or daughter and you've never given them to the Lord. You love them so much and you've held them close by - and you're unwilling to let them go - to give them to God.

One of the great challenges - and blessings of parenthood is releasing your kids to the Lord.

Giving up control and trusting God's provision, care and guidance in their life.

Do you trust Him?

Maybe it's not a child - maybe it's your job - your marriage - a strained relationship.

Have you given these things to the Lord?

Have you given Him complete control - which means you obey what the Bible says in how to relate and interact with these things?

Have you given Him what you treasure the most?

The presumption and prayer of Eli 1:12-18

Hannah is praying - mouthing the words but not speaking audibly - and the priest, Eli, presumes (postulates / posits / proposes) she's drunk.

This is a bad picture of Eli. He's the priest at Shiloh, yet he doesn't realize when someone is distressed and praying to the Lord for relief and answers!

Hannah is respectful and polite in responding to Eli's accusation, and she shares her "great anxiety and vexation."

Eli blesses her with an indirect prayer that God would grant her request. Little does he realize in about 3 or 4 years this answered prayer will mean a little boy in his house!

Hannah's pregnancy and the birth of Samuel 1:19-20

Hannah's pregnancy is not due to their sexual union.

Her pregnancy is because God remembers Hannah.

This is a miracle as God enables Hannah to become pregnant. This is a baby conceived through normal means, but God is the reason for the conception as He makes it possible for Hannah to conceive.

In Hebrew, the name "Samuel" sounds like *heard of God* - which refers to God hearing Hannah's prayer.

This is evidenced by Hannah's statement at the end of vs. 20, "I have asked for him from the LORD."

Hannah's plan to keep her promise 1:21-23

How often have you seen it portrayed in the movies - a person is in serious trouble - and they call out to God for rescue - and they make great promises in return.

"I'll go to church every Sunday."

"I'll tithe 20% of everything I earn."

"I'll stop drinking."

Often, when the person is back in safe territory, their promise shrinks...or they shrug it off and ignore it.

One might think now that Hannah has a baby, she might change her mind about the vow she made.

It's one thing to say you'll give your son "...to the LORD all the days of his life" before there is ever a life.

But when you're holding that little baby in your arms - nursing him - putting him to bed - playing with him - teaching him to talk - it's a different ball game!

Hannah kept her promise to the LORD - and she had a plan to keep her promise.

She would wean the child, and then bring him to Shiloh “so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.”

This is another bright spot for her husband, Elkanah.

“Jewish law permitted a husband to annul a wife’s vow if he disagreed with it (Num. 30:6-8)” (Be Successful, An Old Testament Study

- 1 Samuel, Attaining Wealth That Money Can’t Buy, by Warren W. Wiersbe, p. 17), but he didn’t annul it - he agreed with it and made a vow of his own (vs. 21). In ancient Jewish culture, weaning was done around the age of 3 - so this vow was kept after raising Samuel for the first 3 years of his life.

Hannah presents Samuel to the Lord 1:24-28; 2:11

After Samuel was weaned, the time comes for the annual family trip to Shiloh. How difficult must it have been - the weeks leading up to their trip! Both Elkanah and Hannah would have been torn.

Their devotion and faith in God - their integrity to keep the promise they made to God - and the love for their son, Samuel.

They brought the appropriate sacrifices to Shiloh - and what a day for Eli!

What would your reaction be if you were in your last years - and all of a sudden you have a 3 year-old in your house!

Eli's older sons were "worthless". They were priests...but "They did not know the LORD." (2:12)

So, in one way, Samuel was a 2nd chance at parenting for Eli.

In 2:11, it says, "And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest."

Somehow, this arrangement worked - as God had huge plans for Samuel.

But think about Hannah (and Elkanah) keeping her vow. She gave up her child...what a tremendous - yet painful change this was. How was she able to stay faithful to her promises...despite the pain?

How do we stay faithful when God is changing something in our life - or in the church - and it hurts?

I think we see it in her prayer - 2:1-10.

Let me draw your attention to vs. 1.

"My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation."

Her focus is on God's power and salvation. As you read through her prayer, her hope is in God - not in the wealth or accomplishments of this world.

In vs. 5 she says, “The barren have borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.” (lonely / sad / dejected)

She knew God could give her more children - and Peninnah’s litter could not give her the happiness and joy Hannah had in the Lord.

In vs. 6-8 she speaks of God’s sovereignty and plan for human history.

In vs. 9-10 she praises the protection of God and His judgment of the wicked.

The bottom line is this: Hannah kept her promise and stayed faithful through painful change because her hope and confidence was in God - not the circumstances of this life.

We often resist change because of the pain it brings.

Change often changes so much of what we are comfortable with - the things we’re familiar with - and we forget that our greatest comfort should be in God and His provision and promises!

Apply it...

Acknowledge / recognize God’s change can hurt.

The surgeons knife heals...but it also hurts!

God changes you - so lives can be changed forever!

God is greater than any painful change. 2:1-10

Close in prayer