

WEEK 3: HANNAH — *Fasted in Deep Desperation & Prayer*

ATTENTION GETTER

Church it is good to be with you as we wrap up our fasting series: Desperation & Devotion. We have looked at the story of David and how he fasted in repentance but also to be able to be able to worship regardless of outcome, the story of Elijah and how he fasted from the spiritual strength and how strength is sustained through dependence, and tonight we look at the story of Hannah, who will show us that God invites us to come to Him honest, vulnerable, and in surrender.

I love that we sang “Make Room” tonight, because it lands with our passage so well tonight.

See, some of you in this room tonight sang God's way is better while carrying heavy burdens. The weight of a fragile marriage. The burden of estranged family relationships. Some of you have legitimate fears around family members and friends who are being affected by our nation's political climate. Others are you are persevering through difficult medical diagnoses, or financial pressure.

And yet—you sang. You lifted your hands or whispered the words, even when God's plan doesn't look like the one you would have chosen. We sang that we would make room to do whatever God wanted even if it's not our initial preference.

If that's you tonight, then you're in good company. Like Hannah, perhaps tonight you will experience that **Desperate, surrendered prayer births divine promises.**

That's our big idea tonight: Desperate, surrendered prayer births divine promises.

BRIDGE

Let's go ahead then and open our Bibles to 1 Samuel 1:1-20 as we look at the story of Hannah. I want to remind that here at Light & Life we believe there is life and transformation to be found when we engage with God's Word regularly, so if you don't have a print Bible, we'd love to give you a Bible.

Let's read 1 Samuel 1:1-20

1 There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. **2** He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. **4** 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. **5** But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. **6** Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. **7** 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. **8** 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?"

9 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. **10** In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. **11** 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."

12 As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. **13** Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk **14** and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

15 "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. **16** Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

18 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.

19 Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. **20** So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

EXEGESIS

Let's unpack this story.

There is this man named Elkanah, and he has two wives. Now I want to remind you that polygamy in the Old Testament is tolerated, but not celebrated—permitted by law in a fallen culture, but never presented as God's design. So we have this brother named Elkanah, who we are told, for all intents and purposes, is a devoted man. We are told that:

- Year after year, he traveled a full day, if not a little longer, to Shiloh, to worship and offer a sacrifice.
- And that he loved Hannah and because he loved her he gave her a double portion. This giving of double portion was a public act, and it brought her honor in a setting that shamed her because she couldn't have children

This was, by all accounts, a kind and generous act, yet it didn't remove the pain, it didn't quite reframe - let alone remove - the ache in Hannah's heart.

It's a bit like applauding or praising someone's resilience after having suffered loss - kind, helpful, but not lasting. Or it's a bit like this week when I was solo parenting, and one of the kids was sick, and just wouldn't give me any space and me visibly losing my patience, and my kind and loving mother in law just kept saying "Ah kids

are like this when they're this age". True, well-meaning, but falls short of what my heart needs.

You see, Elkanah is not wrong to do this, love should be expressed. We are not wrong when we shower honor to counter shame, we should love people who are hurting, **but hear me on this**, while God often uses people to comfort, sustain, and accompany us along the way, only He can resolve deep longing and bring true healing.

Let me say that again

While God often uses people to comfort, sustain, and accompany us along the way, only He can resolve deep longing and bring true healing.

Too often, we rely on the good word of a pastor or a Bible Study leader, or a friend, a podcast, or a sermon online, but we don't come before the presence of God.

Only God can heal. Only God can resolve our longings. Only God can know what our heart truly needs.

And if only God can do this, it's incredibly grievous when He doesn't, because at some point we begin to wonder... is it me? And that leads us to our first teaching point tonight.

1. Barrenness exposes our deepest longings (v7-10)

Both in verse 5 and in verse 6, we are told something that should give us pause...

5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb.

6 Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her

The Lord had closed her womb.

This is hard. And I feel the weight of these words knowing full well that even in this room or those watching online, there have been many who have struggled or are

struggling with infertility. And while I believe only God can heal and resolve the longing for children... As a Pastor, one of the things I must tell you tonight is that barrenness is not a punishment. To say that the Lord has closed her womb does not imply Hannah was being punished, but rather that to affirm that just like God could close her womb, He could also open it. To affirm that barrenness is indeed in God's hands and only He can bring resolution.

The text makes it clear... The agency is with God.

Unfortunately, we do live in a broken world on this side of heaven, and at best our attempts to love someone in pain will fall short of healing like Elkanah's, and at worst, we will use that pain to cause further harm like Peninnah.

And we are told that these reminders of imperfect love from Elkanah, and this emotional torture from Peninnah happened year after year whenever they'd go to worship. And that it all became so much that she would weep and not eat.

Now, I want to be clear.. Hannah stops eating not as spiritual discipline, but because her deepest longing has now come to the surface. And it overwhelms her. The reminder of the barrenness has surfaced that deep longing to have her shame taken away. It's kind of like when you lose your appetite because you're so angry or so hurt, or so overwhelmed. That loss of appetite is there to tell you something is surfacing. So what we do with that is extremely important, because watch this...

Hannah does not go back to Elkanah to validate

Hannah does not go back to Peninnah to mess her up.

Hannah does not try to usurp a child by bringing in a servant.

She doesn't go to the group chat, to social media, to pornography to number, to food. No, she goes to the temple. She goes to the Lord's house. By that today, we understand it to be not necessarily a physical building, but the feet of Jesus. She goes there and she begins to pour out her heart.

V10 tells us that **10** In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly.

And church, if I could give you a first step is to come before the Lord with all honesty and sincerity, for God is near the brokenhearted, for God saves those who are crushed in spirit.

And listen to this next part, because we can teach it to you, but we cannot make it happen for you.

When you come to His feet in honesty, as you are feeling and your deepest longings come before God, God meets you there and in what I can only describe as a mystery, you realize that your deepest longings are fulfilled in God. **Our deepest longings are fulfilled in God.**

Application: So perhaps tonight, whether at this altar in a few moments or in the privacy of your home, would you come to His feet?

Transition: Because before God answers our requests, He often reshapes our hearts—so that now having our longings fulfilled in Him, we can pray in surrender. For God responds to surrendered prayers.

2. God responds to surrendered prayers (v11)

Look at verse 11 with me

11 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."

Hannah addresses God as **YHWH Sabaoth—the Lord of Hosts**. The NIV here uses Lord Almighty - the God of supreme authority. Lord over angels, over creation, over armies, over life and death. And for Hannah especially—**Lord over barrenness and fertility**.

Hannah is calling on the One who has authority over all things—and so should we.

Lord, fight the battle I cannot fight.

Rule where I have no power.

A barren womb does not stop You.

A closed door cannot resist You.

No obstacle placed before us is greater than You who reign over all.

Hannah is not praying to a God she hopes might help—she is surrendering herself to the **One who already reigns supremely**.

And that changes the posture of her prayer.

When Hannah says, *“If you give me a son, I will give him back to You,”* this is not bargaining. This is not a rushed promise made in panic. This is a **costly prayer of surrender**.

She asks for what she wants most—
and then releases her right to own it.

Her prayer moves from:

- *“I want a son”*
to:
- *“If I receive a son, he belongs to You.”*

At that moment, her request becomes an **offering**.

She still desires a child—but she now desires **God more than the outcome**.

And here’s where we have to examine ourselves.

Many of us are praying for things we are not yet willing to surrender.

We want God to answer—but on our terms.

We want the gift—but not the loss of control that comes with trusting Him.

That’s why Scripture tells us in James 4:3:

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.”

Not sinful motives necessarily—
but **possessive ones**.

Hannah's prayer is different. She doesn't ask God to serve her future; she places her future back into God's hands.

Now surrender does not always take the form of a vow, but it has always begun with prayer—and those surrendered prayers consistently reorder our lives.

In the Wesleyan tradition, this posture is often described as full surrender to God's will—what others have called the **"the prayer of indifference."** Not indifference as in apathy—but indifference to personal preference, indifference to the outcome because now we are fully surrendered.

It's the prayer that says:

"Lord, I bring You my request—but I trust You with the result."

That's what Hannah prays.

Her prayer is not powerful because of what she promises, but because of **what she releases**. She places her deepest longing into God's hands and leaves the outcome there.

Application: So let me ask you: what prayer do you need to bring to God in surrender today—not to secure an outcome, but to show Him you trust Him with it?

Transition: Because when a prayer is truly surrendered, faith begins to move forward even before the answer arrives.

3. Faith moves forward before the answer arrives (v12-20)

In verses 12-16, we are told of the encounter between Eli (the priest) and Hannah. She's praying in her anguish, she's praying with passion. We are told that her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. And her prayer is such that she's unaware of how she looks while praying. She's not mindful of proper religious expectations. She's visibly overwhelmed before the Lord.

Hannah prays the kind of prayer Jesus later commends—not to be seen by others, but to be heard by God. And Eli, the priest, thinks she’s drunk. Eli judges what he can see, but he cannot hear what God is receiving—and that tension still exists when we pray honestly. People will misunderstand when you’re real before God. Are you okay with that?

Hannah quickly clarifies that she’s not drunk. not having drank beer or wine, but rather that she was pouring out her heart before the Lord.

Eli the priest now realizing here was someone willing to be honest before God, blesses her and in v18, we are told that **1 Sam 1:18 — Her face was no longer sad.**

Notice that there was no answered prayer yet, Eli didn’t guarantee it, we don’t have a record of God promising a child. But here we learn a valuable lesson about what faith looks like.

Faith is knowing God will answer, and that His answer will be good to us.

Faith is confidence in what is unseen.

Faith is not holding on to the request, but to God Himself.

In Hannah’s case, the Lord opened her womb.

ILLUSTRATION/CHALLENGE

APPLICATION

When You Fast

Deep pain

Long delays

Disappointment

Ask God For

Divine intervention

Endurance

Renewed hope

RESPONSE