



# Study #1: Shattered Expectations

1 Samuel 1:1-2:11  
Week of 9/20

*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" 1 Sam. 1:10-11.*

*At first glance it would appear that this is a kind of bargaining prayer of Hannah's — that she is offering to give the boy back to the Lord only if the Lord will give him to her first so she can enjoy him. It is possible to read this account that way, but, if we look closely at it, we can see what is really happening here, for I am sure this is not the first time that Hannah has prayed at Shiloh for a son. All along she dreamed of having a son of her own, a little boy to love and cuddle, to teach him to walk, to read stories to, to watch him grow to manhood to become a strong, clean, fine young man, the pride of her life. She wanted him for herself, and she prayed often for that, but her prayer was not answered.*

*On this occasion, however, her prayer was different. Having worked through years of barrenness and having thought deeply about the problems, she realized for the first time something she had never known before. She realized that children are not just for parents — they are for the Lord. They are given to parents, loaned for a while, but the reason they are given is for the Lord to use. Certainly this account indicates that this little boy who was ultimately born (Samuel) was God's man to meet the need of a nation. Undoubtedly God had taught Hannah deeply through these hours of struggle over her barrenness, so in great distress and with intense earnestness she prays that God would have what He wanted, a man for His glory and His purposes, and that He would let her be the instrument of that blessing.*

*Immediately we read of a remarkable change in Hannah's heart, for the account says, 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 1:17-18).*

*Immediately, God's peace had begun to guard her heart and spirit. Now, the birth of the baby did not occur until months later, but when the baby was born she named him Samuel, which means, Asked of God. God had granted her request, but there was peace in Hannah's heart right from that very moment of her prayer.*

*This is a beautiful commentary on that well known passage in Philippians 4 where Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). That is what Hannah experienced here. This is the mystery of*

*prayer that is available to us to speak peace into our hearts when we are troubled by the circumstances of our lives.*

*Thank you, Father, for the peace that you can give me as I yield to you in prayer. Thank you that you know what I need and you know when I need it.*

**Life Application:** *Our Father wisely denies petition motivated by self-interest. Rather than sulk, or blame God, shall we ask him to re-focus our hearts toward his will and glory? Have we been circumventing his peace by insisting he do it our way?<sup>1</sup>*

## **Open It**

1. Share with the group a time you wanted something and were certain you would get it as a birthday or Christmas gift only to not get it.

How did you feel and how did you respond?

## **Read It: 1 Samuel 1:1–2:11**

## **Explore It**

2. In 1 Samuel 1:2 what two issues might be causing trouble for Hannah?

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3. According to verse 5, how did Elkanah feel about Hannah? How did he show these feelings to her?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How did Peninnah treat Hannah according to verses 6–7? How did Hannah respond to this sort of treatment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. In 1 Samuel 1:7–11, list three things that Hannah did/didn't do because of her infertility.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. According to 1 Samuel 1:12–18, what did Eli think of Hannah when he saw her praying in the temple?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What happens in 1 Samuel 1:20 and what decision must Hannah make in light of it?

### Shattered Expectation #1: Love and Marriage

8. Look closely at 1 Samuel 1:1–2. What do these verses tell us about God and His plans? How do the truths found in verse 1 bring encouragement to you today?

## POLYGAMY

**po-lig'-a-mi: (n.) The condition of having more than one of wife or husband at the same time; usually, the marriage of a man to more than one woman, or the practice of having several wives, at the same time; - opposed to monogamy.<sup>2</sup>**

*Despite the many examples of polygamy in the Bible, it was never God's intent for people. He created Adam and Eve to cleave together, the two becoming one (Genesis 2:24). He also gave them the joint mission to rule over and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). Once sin entered the world, that mission and the way in which it could be fulfilled, was warped. People began to value God's gifts less. One of those gifts was a committed marriage relationship between a man and woman who were devoted to each other and God... As strange and odd as it sounds, polygamy in the Bible protected women. A second or third wife would be far more cared for than an unmarried woman. She would have the opportunity to bear children — especially sons who would be responsible for supporting her in her old age. She would have protection from abuse from strangers. And she would have a home. She might also have the chance to rescue a family. If the first wife was barren, her sons could continue the family name (1 Samuel 1:2).*

*On rare occasions, the Bible shows how God even used polygamy as a reward of protection for a faithful woman. David married Abigail after she showed great wisdom in the face of her foolish husband, who later died (1 Samuel 25). It's been speculated that Ruth was significantly younger than Boaz because he called her "daughter" (Ruth 2:2).*

*Although the Bible hints that protection of women is probably the main reason why God allowed polygamy, most polygamous marriages were not so altruistic. Marriages were very often contracts between families. Solomon surely loved women (1 Kings 11:3), but it's safe to say most of his wives were given to him to gain political favor. And they were not beneficial for Solomon's walk with God or Israel.*

*The Bible tells us that polygamy was not God's original plan. It is not the ideal of marriage. The fact that it was deemed necessary to protect women and maintain the holdings of men is a commentary on humanity's ability to twist God's plan. God did not intend for women to be useless and worthless without a man. When society decided they were, God acted to protect His daughters.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://biblehub.com/topical/p/polygamy.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.compellingtruth.org/Bible-polygamy.html>

9. We are told in verse 2 that Elkanah had two wives. In what ways does this situation go against God's pattern for marriage?

What are some of the practical ramifications that can come from this sort of relationship?

10. Elkanah is a devout man who takes worship seriously and yet that seems to be lost when it comes to his marriage. How is it that we can be so sure of our relationship and devotion to God and yet miss His plans and purposes so badly in other ways?

11. In what human ways does Elkanah try to alleviate the troubles of Hannah that came as a result of his foolishness?

Why are we so quick to fix spiritual problems through human means? What is usually the results of these attempts?

12. What is our normal response when our relationships are found wanting?

13. How does God want us to deal with relationships that haven't become what we hoped they would?

## Shattered Expectation #2: Infertility

*The tension in this story stems from this simple reality: "Peninnah had children but Hannah had none." Weary from Peninnah's constant mockery, Hannah has an emotional meltdown at the tabernacle in Shiloh. In a moment of deep distress and sorrow, Hannah turns to the only One who can deal with her troubles.*

14. What is it about the issues and struggles like that of infertility that shatters one's hopes and dreams?

15. How can others' opinions or judgments make our trials even more difficult to bear?

16. What thoughts do you have regarding Peninnah? What can we learn about her response to Hannah's pain? Where can we apply these truths to our relationships with our own rivals or enemies?

17. In verse 8 Elkanah sought to help his wife's struggle by using selfish words of encouragement. What is a proper response to those who are suffering with deep pain?

18. What does the fact that Hannah's inner struggles manifested themselves in outward ways (vv7b; 10; 16) tell us about how God has created us?

***The LORD had closed her womb:***

*Beyond Hannah's painful trial there was a purpose of God. God used the trial of a closed womb to accomplish something great in her life and to further the whole plan of salvation. Even though things were hard God was still in charge. It seems strange that Peninnah (who seems of a bad character) was blessed with children and Hannah (who seems of a good character) was cursed with barrenness. Often, we don't understand God's ways until He completes His plan.<sup>4</sup>*

19. What hope can we take from the fact that God was the reason for this trial? How does understanding that God is the God of the difficult give us hope in times of great hopelessness?

When have you seen God use your shattered dreams for a greater good?

**Crisis** tends to move us one way or the other; **toward God** or **toward bitterness**.

20. Which way from the quote above do you turn when your dreams are shattered? Discuss why this is your tendency.

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<sup>4</sup> Guzik, David. "Commentary on [1 Samuel 1:1](#)". "David Guzik Commentaries on the Bible".  
"http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?book=1sa&chapter=001. 1997-2003.

*Hannah's plan, if God blesses her with a child, is to give that child back to God. And that's what she does. In an act of enormous sacrifice, Hannah brings young Samuel to the temple so he can have a life dedicated to God.*

21. What do Hannah's prayers and actions in 1 Samuel 1:21–2:11 tell us about her faith and understanding of God's will?

What specific things can we learn from Hannah's response to some tough circumstances?

What keeps us from following in Hannah's footsteps when it comes to giving our dreams and desires to God even with the noble and good things that we desire?

22. What dreams or expectations is God asking you to give over to him? What practical steps can you take this week to trust God with your most difficult of circumstances?

### **God's movement in seasons of intense pain.**

*1 Samuel 1 is just the beginning of the story. Young Samuel will become a great leader during a wicked time in Israel's history. But the story begins with a woman who is intensely hurt and troubled. God is active in her pain. God has the uncanny way of making something unspeakably good out of something unspeakably terrible.<sup>5</sup>*

23. Spend time in prayer asking God to show you how He is divinely active for good in the tough circumstances you may be facing. Ask him for strength, courage, hope, and divine perspective to see and trust His work through the struggle.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.adabible.org/watch/faithfulness/>