

*Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept many tears. Making a vow, she pleaded, "Lord of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut." 1 Samuel 1:10 & 11*

As a mother of three children, I cannot imagine offering to give one of them away, even to the Lord! The depth of Hannah's longing for a child is something I can sympathize with since I struggled with a similar issue, but it never occurred to me to ask God for a baby only to give it away. However, Hannah knew something that I did not understand in the midst of my struggle; nothing belongs to me! Every good thing in my life comes from the Lord. Whether it's the husband He gave me, the children I have been blessed with, our income, or the house we live in. Every good thing comes from the Lord, and I have no right to try and hold onto it. Some people and things may be in my life for the time being, for me to love and care for, but they all belong to the Lord. "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Praise the name of the Lord." Job 1:21. All things belong to the Creator and we are all firmly in His hands.

Who or what are you clinging to that you need to let go of? What areas of your life are you unwilling to surrender to God? Spend time this week reviewing what you cling to and begin to offer it in prayer to God, who is the source of every good thing.

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*My heart rejoices in the Lord;  
in the Lord, my horn is lifted high.  
My mouth boasts over my enemies,  
for I delight in your deliverance.*

*There is no one holy like the Lord;  
there is no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.*  
1 Samuel 2:1-2

In 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Hannah offers a prayer of praise and gratitude, known as Hannah's Song. She was so thankful to the Lord for giving her a son after many years of barrenness that she poured out her heart in a prayer of pure adoration. So many times in life, our prayers are a little *too* one-sided; we are always asking the Lord for something, but we rarely take the time to simply offer a prayer of thanksgiving for our many blessings. Even after a prayer has been answered, we often move right on to praying for the next thing we feel we "need," without so much as a nod in the Lord's direction for what we already have.

Set aside a few moments today to take stock of your many blessings and offer up your own prayer of praise and gratitude to the Lord.

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*Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8*

Jesus tells us that if we ask, it will be given to us. Just have faith! Still, if I'm being honest, I often feel guilty because I just don't seem to have enough faith to make those mountains move (Mark 11:22-24 & Matthew 21:21-22). I wonder...is it me. Am I lacking in faith, even though I feel like I am praying for something with all my heart?

Hannah prayed for many, many years for a child. Instead of having her prayer answered immediately, she suffered through her husband marrying another woman and fathering children with his new wife. She endured the taunts of her rival. She was depressed, downcast, and starving herself. Hannah walked a long, bitter road before God answered her prayer. His timing wasn't to make her suffer, but Hannah did have to wait for God's timing and plan to be put into action. We don't have a good view from the cheap seats, so we must learn to trust in God's timing, and His ultimate plan. Our faith should be the kind of faith that believes God will work all things for good in His time.

It might be time to evaluate what you are praying for. Sometimes, the things we pray for are really rooted in selfish desires, rather than a place of Godly focus. Let those things go, and determine to pray for things that line up with Godly values and the path set before you. Have faith that God will deliver all things when the time is right.

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*There was a man from Ramathaim-zophim in the hill country of Ephraim. His name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives, the first named Hannah and the second Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. 1 Samuel 1:1-2*

Hannah's husband, Elkanah, had a problem: his wife was barren and he needed an heir. It was permissible, in that time, to take a second wife in order to "be fruitful and multiply," but this is a deviation from God's plan for marriage. Hannah suffered greatly for her husband's choice (1 Samuel 1:7), but in the end God blessed her and she gave birth to many children for Elkanah. Abraham and Jacob made the same mistake and also had to deal with the consequences.

Our free will is a gift from God. Sometimes the choices we make are bad ones and we pay a heavy price for them. We hurt ourselves, and often, we hurt our loved ones in the process. Human thinking rarely solves difficult human problems, since human thinking is the *cause*. The Bible says to "cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will sustain you" (Psalms 55:22). It's possible to over think an issue, and in our disbelief, act in ways that limit God's ability to help.

Letting go is difficult for all of us. We like to be in control, and feel that we are accomplishing something. How many times have we suffered consequences for trying to solve our own problems, like Elkanah and Hannah? Give your problems to God and let Him be creative in finding the solutions.

*"Please my lord," she said, "as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this boy, and since the Lord gave me what I asked Him for, I now give the boy to the Lord. For as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord." Then he bowed and worshipped the Lord there. 1 Samuel 1:26-28*

Hannah's faithfulness to the Lord reaps great rewards. She asked for a son and vowed to give him back in service to the Father. Her weeping and praying touched Eli's heart, and he blessed her, telling her, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you've requested from Him." (1 Samuel 1:17). Hannah remained faithful to her vow and brought her precious, and much loved, child. In verse 28 above, we read that Eli was so touched, that he "bowed and worshipped the Lord there."

When we are faithful to God, it is a testimony to others, and can lead them to God if they are seeking, or strengthen their faith when they are facing difficult times. Be aware of times when you can present a strong testimony of faithfulness to God, and be amazed at how He can work on the hearts of those around you!

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*The boy Samuel served in the Lord's presence and wore a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. 1 Samuel 2:18-19*

As a wife and mother, I am amazed by Hannah's faith and courage. I cannot imagine taking my three-year-old daughter and giving her in service to the Lord. Every instinct in me would fight being separated from her; she's my baby! But Hannah would never have had Samuel if it were not for the goodness of the Lord. Regardless of how difficult it must have been for her to take her son to the temple and leave him there, she remained faithful and was blessed.

Like any mother, she could not forget her son. She made him a robe and took it with her each year when her family traveled to the temple to worship God. She loved Samuel as much as she could, even from a distance. Hannah's motherly love was strong, but there is a stronger love; the love our Father has for us. Even when we are separated from Him through our own choices, God loves us more than we can imagine. He gave *His* only son, that we might be free, and spend eternity with Him. Hannah sacrificed her son in service to God; God sacrificed His son for YOU.

Maybe you have been feeling God pull on your heart to begin a relationship with Him. Maybe you have felt a distance between you and God's loving grace. There is no day better than today. He loves you. He is pursuing you. He is waiting with open arms.