

## WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE #1

**MONDAY** Poor Hannah. Despite years of marriage, she had no child. It was obviously her fault and not her husband's, for he had several children with a second wife. The "flaw" lie within Hannah herself. Lucky Peninnah. She had all the kids. But she also had a heart of stone and taunted Hannah for her barrenness. Reduced to tears and unable to eat, Hannah sank into self-pity. Her husband Elkanah rebuked her gently, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

He was a gracious man. He had legal reason to divorce Hannah – she was quite obvious barren. In OT days, a wife who did produce children to work the farm and one day care for aging parents, was a wife not worth keeping. But Elkanah was made of sterner stuff. With children already around him, and with his farm and future secure, he was more interested in Hannah and her well being than in her child-bearing capabilities.

**READ: I Samuel 1:1-8**

**THINK:** Hannah was not content with what the Lord had for her. She was caught up in the false value system of the world - evaluating her life on the basis of what she did or did not have. Hannah should have answered her husband's rebuke this way: "Do I love thee ten times better? No, my husband, not ten times better and not a hundred times; and not even a thousand. You are ten thousand times ten thousand times better, and more! You are for me and I am for you – always. You are God's greatest gift to my earthly existence and I find immeasurable joy in just being yours." Let us find that attitude within us, and accept what God brings into our lives this week, and rejoice in it.

**TUESDAY** Poor Hannah. Still no child. These days, she doesn't wait to be taunted – she cries on her own. Whenever she reflects on her barrenness and loneliness, tears wash over her cheeks. Once, while in Shiloh with her husband, (Shiloh is where the tabernacle was set up) Hannah made her way alone to the Tabernacle area, found a quiet spot, and poured out her heart again to the Lord. Along with her sobbing and groaning, she uttered promises to the Lord that she would keep if only He would hear her prayer and grant her a son. Nearby, the old priest, Eli, heard her groanings and saw her lips moving. He did not know that she was mouthing a prayer, and he thought her to be intoxicated. He chastised her, "Throw away your wine! Must you come here drunk?!"

**READ: I Samuel 1:9-14**

**THINK:** Some days are worse than others. Some may be horrendously bad. Our motives may be misjudged. We may be wrongly criticized and unfairly treated, even by those who should know better. The strength to not only endure but to rejoice comes from our relationship to the Lord. As we face difficulties, let us remember our place in God's family and Kingdom. By promising the Lord to give her son (if one came along) back to the Lord, Hannah is demonstrating the great principle of the Lord's ownership of all we are and all we have. All we have belongs to Him.

**WEDNESDAY** Accused of being drunk, Hannah quickly denies that such is the case. She explained her situation to Eli, and the old priest was touched, and made her prayer his own prayer: "May the God of Israel grant your request." Hearing these words, Hannah is greatly encouraged and returned home with a new bounce in her step and a new glow to her face, no longer sad.

**READ: I Sam. 1:15-18**

**THINK:** Think about what made the change in Hannah – from one too distressed to

eat, to one who is eating again and no longer sad. First, she prayed. Secondly, she received encouragement from Eli. Thirdly, she committed the problem to the Lord and determined to leave it with Him. Hannah has demonstrated to us the way to handle discouragement. Let us learn to deal with the trials of life in this same way.

**THURSDAY** Hannah committed her problem – that is, her barrenness – to the Lord. The Lord honored her request and granted her a son. Although at one level, the child was a result of a loving, sexual relationship with her husband, at another, it was all God's doing. A son, Samuel, was conceived and born. Hannah did not take Samuel to Shiloh that year, but announced that she would stay home for the time being, and take him in a few years. At that time, she added, she would present Samuel to the Lord and leave him at the Tabernacle.

**READ: I Samuel 1:19-23**

**THINK:** More than most mothers, Hannah must have felt a temptation to be over-protective and over-possessive with her son. But she evidenced a remarkable understanding that every gift – even a child – comes from God. And ultimately belongs to Him. She found it within herself to do the almost unthinkable: to give her young child back to Him. Let us resolve to give unto the Lord what is His anyway: all we are, all we have, all we hope to be, and all that comes into our lives this day, and every day.

**FRIDAY** Several years later, Hannah went with her husband and took Samuel to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They also took sacrifices for worshipping God. She reminded Eli of her visit years ago and explained that she was back with the child, and that she was giving him to the Lord, and leaving him there at the Tabernacle. Then she and the whole family worshipped the Lord together.

**READ: I Samuel 1:24-28**

**THINK:** In this days, God does not want us to drop off our kids on the church door stoop and leave them there. That's not giving them to the Lord. But in Hannah's day, that was a good way to commit a child to the Lord. Of course, Hannah visited her son and provided for him. In later years, Samuel lived in the same town as his parents. The point is this: Hannah had remarkable sight. Spiritual sight! She saw her son as belonging to God more than to herself, and she lived her life with that discovery controlling her actions. Let us strive to keep our eyes on the things of God and the things of eternity. Let us live with eternity's values in view.

**SATURDAY** After her long-awaited son (Samuel) was finally born, Hannah offered a prayer to the Lord. Her heart was overflowing with joy, and she prayed. In her prayer, she paused now and then, it seems, and directed some remarks to Peninnah and to others who may have scorned her in her barrenness. She implied that they were suffering some sort of loss with their own children – perhaps a death or maybe physical or emotional separation. She credits the Lord with all the blessings that have come to her.

**I Samuel 2:1-8**

There may have been times in the past when Hannah felt as though God had been, in some ways, unfair. Here, she testified strongly that God is never unfair or unjust. The Lord brings both death and life! Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap, at God's hand. Let us always remember that God has lifted us from the dust – from a pile of ashes – and made us to be those who are accepted and honored by the Father.