

Hannah: Purpose in Dedication

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Prepare:

This study will provide insight into the character of Hannah, a woman who was loved dearly by her husband, Elkanah, and provoked by his other wife, Peninnah. She had a void in her life as she was barren and desired to have children. I Samuel 1:5-6 (NIV) says, “The Lord had closed her womb.” Her husband’s love could not and did not replace her desire for a child or erase her shame at being barren. In preparation for the lesson, the leader should read I Samuel chapters one and two.

Four sections will comprise this study: *Hannah’s Provocation, Hannah’s Prayer, Hannah’s Promise, and Hannah’s Praise*. The leader should read the study introduction and each section’s introduction. Next choose volunteers to read the scriptures prior to the presentation of the monologues. Volunteers chosen for the monologues are encouraged to be dramatic. After each monologue, section questions may be discussed in small groups, or the whole group, or responses written on paper. Conclude the study by reading the closing and praying that each participant will discover her purpose of dedication.

Materials Needed:

Bible
Paper
Pen
White Board or Chart Paper
Copies of the Monologues

Immerse:

During Hannah’s lifetime, a woman’s value and worth was connected to her role as a wife and mother. If a wife had no children or was “barren,” the Jewish community abhorred her because they believed her primary purpose was to be fruitful. The directive to be fruitful and multiply was first given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. Hannah was not the first woman in the Bible to have a story of barrenness and disgrace, nor would she be the last. The story of barren women who eventually bore children to fulfill God’s purpose include Sarah (Genesis 17:16-19), Rebekah (Genesis 25:21-26), Rachel (Genesis 29:31, 30:22-24), and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-17). However, Hannah’s name means “grace or favor” and God showed her favor by turning her barrenness into fruitfulness. This study demonstrates how Hannah’s disgrace propelled her into fulfilling her God ordained purpose of dedication.

HANNAH’S PROVOCATION

Hannah was barren. People in ancient Israel believed that a large family was a blessing from God. Infertility, therefore, was a source of humiliation and shame. To make matters worse, her husband Elkanah’s other wife, Peninnah, had several children and provoked Hannah mercilessly.

Read: I Samuel 1:1-8

Engage:

1. Discussion questions:
 - Why did Peninnah treat Hannah with such disdain?
 - Why do you think Elkanah was clueless about Hannah's grief?
 - Peninnah represents anyone or any obstacle that hinders you from fulfilling God's ordained purpose for your life. Identify any "provokers" in your life that may be impeding you from fulfilling your God-ordained purpose. How do you respond or handle your provokers?

PENINNAH'S MONOLOGUE

Peninnah is my name, but some call me Penny. I am Elkanah's second wife. He married me because Hannah, his first wife, can't have children. That is shameful. But as for me, I gave him several children. Fruitful? That I am. You would think that since I have given him several children he would love and adore me, right? But no – he still loves Hannah. He favors her over me. So I take great pleasure in provoking and irritating her. Other people talk about her behind her back because she is childless, but I just tell her face forward. I love taunting her whenever we go to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. She cries the entire time. Seeing her cry thrills me. My children parade around her until she loses her appetite and weeps bitterly. Elkanah, has no clue why she is weeping. He doesn't know that my taunting makes her miserable. My children and I are constant reminders of her barrenness. He doesn't understand the shame she feels by the community because she is barren. I know he loves her a lot but she can't give him children like me. So, I'll just keep on provoking her as revenge for the lack of love I receive from him. One day I believe he will really love me. *1

HANNAH'S PRAYER

After years of enduring Peninnah's provocation, out of her grief and anguish, Hannah prayed to God, pleading for divine intervention, to give her a son. Although her husband loved her deeply, she still felt cursed and abandoned by God.

Read: I Samuel 1: 9-18

HANNAH'S MONOLOGUE

I am married to Elkanah, who loves me dearly. We have tried to have children but I am unable to conceive. I remain barren. Barrenness in our community is a stigma as a woman's worth and value are equated to her bearing children. Since I could not get pregnant, Elkanah married another woman named Peninnah. I call her "Penny" as she has little value to me although she has produced children for Elkanah. She unmercifully taunts me about my barrenness especially when he isn't present. Her teasing is worse whenever we travel to Shiloh every year to worship and offer sacrifices to on me than on Penny, which only makes her treat me worse. One year I had enough of her provocation. I was tired of crying and losing my appetite because of her irritating words. I had cried so much I thought my eyeballs were about to pop out. Finally my heart said, "Enough, no more!"

So I got up, left my family, and went to the sanctuary to pray, weeping bitterly before the Lord. I told the Lord I was truly tired of being verbally abused by Penny because I couldn't get pregnant. I promised Him if He gave me a son I would dedicate him back to the Lord for all the days of his life. As I stayed at the altar pleading with the Lord to hear my cry and acknowledge my desire for a son, the preacher came by and thought I was drunk. He saw my lips moving but couldn't hear my voice as I was praying inwardly to my

God. He asked me, “Why are you in the sanctuary drunk?” I told him I was not intoxicated for I had not consumed any wine. Couldn’t he see I was distressed? I was pleading with God to answer my prayer. So the preacher had compassion on me and blessed me saying, “Go in peace and may God grant you your heart’s desire.” He gave me hope. I thanked him for showing me favor and I left the sanctuary believing God had heard my prayer. *2

HANNAH’S PROMISE

Hannah promised to dedicate her child back to God if He opened her womb and blessed her. Even though she made this promise, she never told Elkanah until after the child was born. He didn’t think she could keep her promise as she had been barren so long, but Hannah kept her word.

Read: I Samuel 1:19-28, II Samuel 2:18-21, 26

ELKANAH’S MONOLOGUE

I was so excited and overjoyed at Samuel’s birth. *Finally* Hannah and I have a son! She told me she wanted to name him Samuel because she had “asked God for him.” After he was born and it was time for us to go and offer our annual sacrifice to the Lord, Hannah told me about the promise she had made to the Lord, to give our son back to Him. I was surprised! We had waited so long for this child. Hannah said she would wean Samuel before taking him to the Lord’s house to live always. I supported her in her decision so she could keep her promise to the Lord.

After Samuel was weaned, we took him to the sanctuary and presented him to the preacher. Hannah reminded the preacher that she was the woman whom he thought was drunk as she poured out her heart to the Lord several years ago. She told him that Samuel was the manchild God had given us in response to her prayer. Now she was keeping her promise and dedicating him back to the Lord to fulfill God’s purpose.

I am so proud my Hannah kept her promise, but she made a big sacrifice by dedicating Samuel to the Lord. We only see him once a year, so Hannah makes and brings him a robe to wear as he ministers before the Lord. The preacher is so grateful that we gave Samuel to the Lord as his own sons are very wicked and don’t obey him. His prayer and blessing for us is that God will give us more children to replace Samuel. God is faithful! Now we have three more sons and two daughters. Hallelujah! *3

HANNAH’S PRAISE

In response to God answering her prayer, Hannah praised and thanked God for removing her shame and suffering.

Read: I Samuel 2: 1-10

Engage:

2. Discussion questions:

- Hannah had a void in her life. Identify a void in your life. How has it impacted your relationship with your family, your friends, but more importantly God?
- Hannah was a victim of verbal abuse. How should women deal with verbal abuse?
- Prayer changed Hannah’s life. How can prayer change your circumstances and propel you into your God ordained purpose?

3. Discussion questions:

- What promise have you made to God that required making a sacrifice?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, how difficult is it for you to keep your promises to God and why?
- Hannah purposed to dedicate Samuel for God’s service. What have you purposed to dedicate to God for His service?

Engage:

4. Discussion questions:

- Hannah's praise reflects her pain, her deliverance, her worth, and her trust in God. Looking introspectively, where do you see yourself in Hannah's praise and why?
- Hannah's praise shows how God turns adversity into a blessing. Identify a time when God turned your adversity into a blessing. How did you feel and how did it impact others?
- One's purpose is often birthed out of pain. What lesson can we learn from Hannah about birthing our purpose?

HANNAH'S PRAISE

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! God has answered my prayer! For years I suffered verbal abuse because I was barren. I felt cursed. I felt abandoned. But God! He heard my plea and showed me grace and mercy. He delivered me from my shame and disgrace. He shut the mouths of my provokers. No longer can they taunt and tease me. God opened my womb. He made me a woman of worth and value. Praise God – the pain of barrenness is gone! I rejoice in the God of my salvation. He has blessed me to birth six children. My foes look at me in awe because the Lord granted my petition. Thank you God for favor! I am not forgotten. You have elevated my status and given me a new name – Grace! I will forever praise You and tell of Your faithfulness all the days of my life. Praise the Lord!

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Hannah's story teaches us the importance of seeking God, keeping our promises to God, and dedicating our children back to God. For through pain, provocation, and prayer, Hannah shows us that God can fulfill His purpose. After God opened her womb, she gave birth to Samuel, kept her promise, and dedicated him to God. God used Samuel, not only as a priest, but as Israel's last judge and prophet who anointed Saul and David as kings of Israel. Hannah's purpose of dedication is dual: Dedicate ourselves to keeping our promises to God and dedicate our children to God for His service.

Close in Prayer