

Hannah



A Monument to Motherhood (1:1 — 2:21)

When King Agesilaus was dying, he gave orders that no statues of him be erected, and added, "If I have done anything of an honorable exploit, that is my monument; but if I have done none at all, your statues will signify nothing." Such is a fitting perception of monuments—those not raised in granite are often the best! The best monument is the impression of one's life and the memories of the good accomplished in word and deed.

In the lovely lady Hannah we discover a mother whose life is "a monument to motherhood." She has been admired by Bible students for centuries and has received accolades as "the prayerful mother" or "God's ideal mother." However you look at her, you must place her alongside the most godly women in Holy Scripture.

From the Bible we learn these historical facts about Hannah. She was the fourth great woman unable to conceive. Among this select number she stands as the most spiritual. Sarah laughed; Rebekah was indifferent; Rachel was irritated and angry. Only Hannah sought divine help through prayer as far as we know. We have no biographical data for Hannah because it was customary in her time to list only the male ancestry. We know only what is found in the opening pages of 1 Samuel.

Hannah was Elkanah's first wife. Since she was barren, a second wife was added. This ar-

rangement was not in harmony with God's original plans (Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:15; Matthew 19:4). The sad consequences of Elkanah's multiple wives are normal. Peninnah was jealous of the special love shown to Hannah and became proud and haughty. She made Hannah's defect a ground for constant insult. Hannah did not angrily retaliate but patiently endured the cruelties. Hannah's sorrow was increased each year when the annual sacrifice at Shiloh occurred. Finally her burden became too great. The stress, shame, and self-recrimination all came to a head. Stricken with agony, she left the sacrificial banquet and sought refuge at the tabernacle.

The tabernacle, according to Jewish tradition, had lost much of its glory by this time. A few curtains were draped around the ark, and the tent was surrounded by a low stone wall in disrepair. At the gate sat the high priest Eli. Hannah entered the court and began pouring out her soul to God in silent prayer. She was noticed by Eli, who assumed that she was drunk. Eli rebuked Hannah in harsh terms, only to be answered with Hannah's piteous explanation. Understanding Hannah's burden, Eli gave her his prayer-wish that a child would be born to her. As Hannah left the tabernacle, she was totally relieved. She had abandoned her weight of sorrow into the hands of God. She left assured that a son would be given to her and that she would offer him in consecrated service to God.

Hannah went to Elkanah and immediately shared the news with him. Together they rejoiced in the assurance of an answered prayer. The child was born, and for three years he was nurtured with a love that was uniquely designed to equip him for service as God's last judge and first prophet.

Three years later Hannah returned to the annual feast, prepared to leave her young child. As she returned to the tabernacle, she stood where she had three years before. No doubt the memories of that fateful day flooded her mind (1:26, 27).

As she dedicated Samuel, she offered a song of adoration and praise to Jehovah. She dedicated her tender child to His merciful care. With the arrival of each annual sacrifice, Hannah brought a coat for Samuel. Each stitch of that coat had been sewn with love. This is the brief history of this marvelous monument to motherhood!

HANNAH'S MONUMENT

Specific traits of character and attitude combine to erect a lasting monument to motherhood.

The Trait of Faith in God

When in doubt and despair Hannah turned to God (1:9-18; 2:1-10). Her faith is so pronounced it cannot be missed!

First, she demonstrated faith by believing that God would give her a child. As time passed, her grief had surely worn away the strength of her spirit. Years of wonder, doubt, and occasional hope made a hurting cycle in her dreams. Yet she became increasingly dependent upon God. Finally, unable to hold the burden, she went to God. As she left Eli, she was confident in God's answer (1:17). Hannah had cast her burden upon the Lord. She had done what she could and left what she had no control over in God's care.

Second, she demonstrated faith in dedicating Samuel to God as she presented him to Eli (2:1-10). First Samuel 1:27 contains words of supreme confidence: "For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him." The song of Hannah (2:1ff.) is a profound statement of deep faith. It reveals a tenderness of spirit and a joy of devotion that are found nowhere else in the Old Testament and are paralleled only by Mary's song in the New Testament (Luke 1:46ff.). Hannah's song was a great reflection upon God as a holy, strong, wise, and supreme Judge.

Third, she demonstrated faith in leaving Samuel at the tabernacle (1:28; 2:11). He was but three years old! She held no fears. She had placed him in God's care.

Hannah's faith enables us to gain insight into texts like Hebrew 4:16 and 1 Peter 5:7.

The Trait of Patience in Trials (1:7)

We do not know how long she was barren. No doubt she often felt the words of Psalm 142:4b: "There is no escape for me." It seemed that providence played favorite to all but her. She could have easily believed that God had made a big mistake. The cruel remarks of Peninnah agonized gentle Hannah beyond understanding. What was she to do? She remained patient and endured the trials. This patience eventually permitted her to deepen her faith and to lift her hopes.

The Trait of Devotion to Her Children

(1:22; 2:19)

She devoted herself to Samuel. Thoughtfully and constantly she mothered. She prayed over him and directed his thoughts toward God. To Hannah, rearing her son was a service dedicated wholly to God. The Talmud makes a point that modern mothers would do well to remember: "Who is best taught? He that is taught of his mother!" The devotion of Hannah is best symbolized by that little coat brought each year. Literally, it was an undergarment of wool, woven without seams. Over this coat the priests would place the ephod. Each year Samuel could expect his mother to bring him that wonderful symbol of her devotion.

The Trait of Sacrifice (1:28)

She was willing to give up her most precious prize to God. She freely offered up her will to God. Making a fresh surrender of herself to God, in her vow she sought only His glory. She willingly and lovingly sacrificed her own needs so Samuel would have what was best for him.

The Trait of Parenting (1:28)

She had a singular goal for her son—that he would live in God's house forever (1:22). She saw her child as a trust, not an absolute gift. Her position had serious responsibilities, and she made sure that she acted faithfully to her charge. She saw her duty as not only rearing a son but

also as giving God a servant and a leader! These realizations should be found in the thoughts of every mother today. As a parent Hannah succeeded. The last of Hannah's biography confirms that her son grew before God (2:21).

MONUMENTAL LESSONS

From the mothering of Hannah, lessons of eternal value are learned.

Remember: A mother's role is vital! A mother's faith will be transplanted into her children. If her faith is strong, it will sprout and grow. A mother's temperament will be reflected in her children. Mothers, are you giving your children a sensitivity to God, devout faith, and unselfish service? Mothers, in times of temptation will your child find security in the thoughts of "Mom"? What children see they imitate. It is crucial for mothers to demonstrate gentleness, reverence, and refinement so their children will imitate such traits!

Remember: A woman's calm faith in God and ever-present gentleness will bring sweetness into the lives of her husband and children. Mothers who serve in their God-given roles with gentle words and patient kindness will make theirs a "home, sweet home"!

Remember: Mothers must nurture their children for God! Mothers are to instill within their children a perpetual devotion to God. They must impart impressive teachings about God and His authority. Happy is the mother who shows her children the joys of daily obedience to God's will and the beauty of holiness in conduct and character.

CONCLUSION

The coral reefs are perhaps the greatest monuments of nature. Their beauty and expanse are unsurpassed. They are formed by the skeletons which the corals secrete during life. In fact, these great reefs are a monument to life that was lived. The indestructible record of their existence bids defiance to all time. Such is the memorial of a godly mother like Hannah!

Mothers, be sure your lives are monuments of joy and gladness. Spend your energies instilling an unshakable faith in God, patience in the face of trials, devotion and sacrifice to others, and a never failing commitment to God Almighty. Mothers, may the objective of your parenting be as Hannah's, "So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord" (1:28).

—John Kachelman

Hannah: A Monument to Motherhood **(1 Samuel 1:1—2:21)**

1. A monument of faith in God. When in doubt and despair, she turned to God (1:9-18; 2:1-10).
2. A monument of patience in trials (1:7). Hannah struggled with barrenness for so long.
3. A monument of devotion to children (1:22; 2:19). She loved and cared for Samuel.
4. A monument of sacrifice (1:28). She was willing to give her precious son to God.
5. A monument of parenting (1:28). She had a singular goal for her son—that he would live in God's house forever (1:22).

Hannah: God's Idea of an Ideal Mother **(1 Samuel 1:1—2:21)**

1. She prays diligently, pouring out her heart to God for her children (1:10-18).
2. She understands the importance of being with her children and nourishing them (1:21, 22).
3. She has one overruling goal in her life—to see her children stay in the Lord's house forever (1:22b, 28; 2:20).
4. She conducts herself in such a manner that her husband respects her opinions and advice (1:23).
5. She has an unshakable trust in God's power (1:27; 2:1-10).
6. She has small, subtle ways of communicating her love and devotion to her children (2:19).

"The Lord Has Given!" **(1 Samuel 1:27)**

What depth of spirituality is in this phrase! This is a great revelation of Hannah's heart.

1. It reveals a trust and dependence upon God for sustaining us. God will provide!
2. It reveals a heart which expressed needs and desires. God will hear and respond!
3. It reveals a lack of trust of human ability. God can while man cannot!
4. It reveals one who understands the great giving God. God wants to give!

The Roadmap to Calm **(1 Samuel 1:9-18)**

Hannah was distraught. Her heart was sad (1:8); she was greatly distressed (1:10); her spirit was oppressed (1:15). She was struggling. But she survived! She went through the gloom into daylight. How did this happen?

1. She went to worship (1:9).
2. She prayed a strong and intense prayer to God (1:10, 15).
3. She sought God's blessings as she "cast her cares upon Him" (1:11).
4. She accepted personal responsibility to do something (1:11).
5. She was open with another about her distress and needs (1:14-16).
6. She left with her burdens eased, and her face "was no longer sad" (1:18; cf. Jeremiah 31:13b).

"The Lord Remembered" **(1 Samuel 1:19)**

The intense cry of Hannah (1:11) was answered in a brief statement. Why did God remember her? Because of her faith, prayer, distress, and troubles. What consolation is there in this?

1. In the midst of struggles, God *will* remember us and satisfy our needs (Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Psalm 34:15-20).
2. When it appears we are outnumbered, God will rescue us (Proverbs 11:8).
3. Man may, and often does, forget, but not God (Psalm 37:28).

Read Deuteronomy 4:31; Genesis 19:29; Psalm 50:15. As great as God's memory is, it is also great for its ability to "remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

A Mother's Many Faces **(1 Samuel 1:1—2:19)**

1. She has a face etched with sorrow and struggles from irritations and limitations which she is powerless to control (1:2-7).
2. She has a face of devotion and praise in worship assemblies (1:5).

3. She has a face of earnest prayer as she pours out her soul to God, begging Him for help (1:9-18).
4. She has a face of joy and fulfillment as she senses purpose and meaning to life (1:20).
5. She has a face of tender affection as the tiny child is cared for and his needs are met each day (1:22, 23).
6. She has a face reflecting the sorrow of separation as the child must go on his way in life and the apron strings are cut (2:11).
7. She has a face of fond pride as the child matures and takes his rightful place in productive social living (2:19).

There is great beauty in a mother's many faces. This beauty is not diminished by time or marred by wrinkles or blemished by age spots. There is a soothing calm that quiets a child's troubled heart, quells the child's storms, and fosters a bold security. The mother's many faces are long remembered. When her eyes close at death, it is but another of the many faces to remember—the face of tranquil rest and unearthly peace, for she sleeps in the Lord's care. Her benevolent deeds bring her a bed of ease! There can be no greater blessing than recalling the mother's many faces!

Common Causes for Gloom **(1 Samuel 1:7)**

Hannah was in the depths of despondency; she was depressed (1:8b, 15, 10). What caused this gloom in her life?

1. An irritating, person, Peninnah (1:7)
2. Feelings that she was a total failure for having no children (1:2, 5, 6; cf. 1:16)
3. A lack of understanding God's will (1:5b, 6b, 11)
4. A lack of physical care when she refused to eat (1:7b)

But Hannah rose out of the dire depths by listening to a loving husband who truly cared (1:8). She "rose up," got busy, and ate and nourished herself (1:9). She prayed strongly to the Lord (1:10). She turned her problem over to God. It was too big for her, and she stopped trying to solve it for herself. For those who trust in God and are able to overcome gloom and doom in daily living, a glorious epilogue awaits (2:20, 21).

The Misunderstood God **(1 Samuel 1:5, 6)**

Hannah's years of barrenness were misunderstood. There was purpose, but that purpose was not grasped. God was misunderstood. The principle here is that God's ways are not our ways, and often we do not perceive them (Isaiah 55:9).

1. Sometimes God is misunderstood to be punishing when He is not.
2. Sometimes God is misunderstood to be showing favoritism when He is not.
3. Sometimes God is misunderstood as being absent when He is not (1:11).
4. Sometimes people use their misunderstandings about God to condone sinful practices and say, "This *must* be the Lord's will for my life!"

In short, sometimes God is blamed when He is really misunderstood. Once the misunderstanding is corrected, all becomes clear. The son Hannah longed for was not given until she was ready to dedicate him to the Lord. Let us be cautious, for a misunderstanding of God will cause pain, sorrow, and a lack of faith! Wherever the trial or test, let us not misunderstand God! (Job 9:1-12; 5:8; 13:15).

Strong Assurance in Prayer **(1 Samuel 1:27)**

As we pray to God, we can be bold! God hears and will answer our prayers (Ephesians 3:20; Hebrews 4:16). Why did Hannah possess such strong assurances in her prayers?

1. She knew that God cared about her distress (1:10).
2. She knew her heart was consecrated, honest, and open to God (1:15).
3. She knew the inner joy and peace which resulted from genuine prayer (1:18).
4. She had resolved to work and trust in God's provisions (1:11, 12, 22).
5. She had convictions, trust, faith, and resolve in prayer's potential.
6. Her assurances in prayer were strengthened by her thanksgiving when prayers were answered. She did not remain silent when God gave!

An Alarming Practice **(1 Samuel 1:12-18)**

In the solemn atmosphere of the tabernacle, troubled Hannah poured out her heart to God. Eli observed her outward behavior and judged her in a wrong manner. His error is practiced by too many today. It is an alarming practice for one person to judge another before knowing all the facts.

1. One may jump to conclusions that are all wrong (1:14).
2. One may add further tragedy to a burdened heart. Hannah already felt she was a failure. Now she was made to feel "worthless" (1:16).
3. One may vilify—it caused questions to be unnecessarily raised about Hannah's character (1:16).
4. One may fail to make an effort to look at the heart (1:15).
5. One may reveal an insensitive, harsh, hasty, and unfeeling disposition.

As wrong as Eli was, he changed when he recognized error. He came to Hannah's assistance and encouraged her (1:17, 18). He had learned a vital lesson!

Successful Parenting **(1 Samuel 1:28)**

No words can adequately articulate the agony of a parent with an erring child. While there is no foolproof system which guarantees parents' success in rearing children, parents ought to follow certain principles.

1. Realize the greatness of parental duty, for each child is a gift from God! (1:27).
2. Realize the urgency of imparting all-important spiritual principles in young and tender hearts (1:24).
3. Take time and energy to "dedicate" each child to the Lord (1:28).
4. Impress upon youth the duty to serve God in lengthy labors (1:28).

Parents can only teach what they know. They can only demonstrate attitudes which they possess and instill respect for God to the degree that they revere Him themselves. Thus, parents must make sure their lives are godly in word and in example.