

Series: Family Matters
#1 A Desperate Housewife
I Samuel 1: 1-28

Introduction:

It was early one Friday morning; a husband was busily getting ready for work and just before heading out for the day he looked over at his beautiful wife who was just waking up and she had a big smile on her face.

She said, "Honey, I'll bet you don't know what day this is?" Her husband, who had a horrible time keeping dates straight in his head and was notorious for confusing or forgetting special days, smiled back, with a brain freeze, and said, "Sweetheart, how could I ever forget. This is a special day for us!"

Then, he quickly walked out the door to work. He was in a mental fog all day. He couldn't focus on his work because he kept trying to figure out what was so special about this day. As the day wore on, he became more nervous. He did not want to go home and disappoint his wife, so he devised a plan.

On the way home, he stopped by the florist and picked out an expensive and beautiful bouquet of flowers. He called the fanciest restaurant in town and made a reservation for two. Then, he called and managed to get tickets to the Broadway musical that was in town. He pulled in the driveway, rushed in the house, gave his wife a big kiss and told her to put her favorite dress on because they were going out for a night on the town to celebrate.

On the way home, his wife leaned over, put her head on his shoulder and said, 'This was a great evening.' And it was. He'd spent \$500 to celebrate this special day, even though he still didn't know what they were celebrating. Then his wife said, 'Best Ground Hog Day ever!'

We know what today is, don't we? It's not Ground Hog Day. It's Mother's Day.

Sharon Twitchell wrote a poem called 'Before I Was a Mom.' Let me read you a few lines:

Before I was a mom, I made and ate hot meals. I had unstained clothing. I had quiet conversations on the phone.

Before I was a mom, I cleaned my house each day. I never tripped over toys or forgot the words to lullabies.

Before I was a mom I had never been puked on, pooped on, spit on, chewed on, peed on, or pinched by tiny fingers.

Before I was a mom I had complete control of my mind, my thoughts, my body, and my mind. I slept all night.

Before I was a mom, I never held down a screaming child so that doctors could do tests or give shots.

I never held a sleeping baby just because I didn't want to put it down.

I never felt my heart break into a million pieces when I couldn't stop the hurt.

I never knew that something so small could affect my life so much.

I never knew that I could love someone so much.

I never knew I would love being a Mom.

Motherhood is an incredibly high calling, and it's not an easy calling. So today, it is very appropriate for us to pause and say, "Thank you" to our mothers, and to honor them, and thank God for them.

At the same time, I realize that Mother's Day is not a very happy day for everyone. For lots of different reasons. Some of you lost your mother, or you don't have a very good relationship with your mother, or you are a mother and don't have a good relationship with your kids.

Which reminds me of the story I heard of a mother who had three sons and they were just rambunctious. They fought all the time, were always getting into mischief and it seems like this mother was always being a police officer, probation officer, or referee most of the time.

One day she and her next-door neighbor were talking, and the mother was describing how exhausted she was. Her neighbor said, "If you had to do it all over again would you have children?" She said, "Absolutely, but not the same ones!"

Maybe your kids are grown up and out of the house, and you have some regrets, and wish you could go back and do motherhood over again. Or maybe you'd love to be a mother, and that just hasn't happened.

So, if Mother's Day is painful for you, the most important thing I can tell you is that God understands, and he cares deeply about that. And my prayer today is that God Himself will minister to you in just the way you need.

Now I know that scripturally speaking, the dad is to be the head of the home, but in many ways we would all agree that the mother is the heart of the home.

I'm beginning a series of family-oriented messages today, which I have done for many years from Mother's Day to Father's Day, that I'm calling "**Family Matters.**"

I am absolutely convinced not just from a biblical perspective, but from a social and cultural perspective that the traditional family really matters, and there are a lot of matters to consider when talking about the family. The traditional family is God's idea and still the best environment where healthy relationships can grow and thrive...that leads to a safe and stable society.

The title of Today's Message is: **A Desperate Housewife**

I would say to all of you ladies today: You may not be the best cook. You may not be the best housekeeper. You may not be the best money manager, but you can be an amazing woman of God, and you'll see how in this message.

By the way, this message applies equally to moms, dads, husbands, kids and to anyone whether you are single or married.

The idea of wives being desperate, disillusioned, and/or dissatisfied is not something new. It's been happening since marriage began.

Today we'll look at a desperate housewife in ancient Israel. [Turn to I Samuel 1]

"There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none." (I Samuel 1:1-2, NIV)

Let's PRAY

Though not very well known, she is one of the greatest women in the Bible. Her name was Hannah. If your name is Ann, Annie, or Anna you are named after this woman. Her name means "grace" or "favor." She was a woman who found the favor of God and the peace of God through her desperate situation.

Life isn't easy whether you are married or single. Life is hard. Things get tough. But we're going to learn from this desperate woman today how to navigate through the tough times of life in such a way that the PEACE of God will comfort you, the JOY of God will bless you, and the POWER of God will strengthen you.

1. In Your FRUSTRATION Serve the Lord

I bet if I were to ask all of you ladies if it is tough being a wife and mother today, I would probably get some strange looks that say, "I can't even believe you are asking that question!"

7 Common Complaints Housewives Have Today About Their Husbands

1. "He Never Asks How I'm Doing."
2. "I Have to Handle Everything."

Much of what's known as "invisible labor," like keeping up the household schedule and tracking the family's information and obligations, usually falls in the wife's lap. "They feel like they have to be the manager of all of those things."

3. "He Always Wants to Fix but Is Rarely Willing to Listen."

"When women want to talk about something, most of the time, they just want their husbands to listen," she says. "But the husbands tend to think they need to jump in and fix whatever problem it is." While the husband may be coming out of a loving place and trying to help, their solutions fall on deaf ears because "The woman doesn't want to be fixed. She just wants to be heard."

By offering solutions, the man is saying he's more capable and smarter than the woman, which can come off as demeaning.

4. "He's Not Emotionally Present."
5. "He's Always Looking at His Phone."
6. "He's an Overgrown Kid."
7. He's Only Nice When He Wants Sex, otherwise there's no intimate connection."

Let me tell you how difficult Hannah had it. Let's just say her home life wasn't exactly ideal.

Right off the bat you see two problems. First, she had competition. She wasn't the only wife in the house. The fact that Elkanah had two wives tells me he wasn't very wise. Hannah not only had competition, but her other problem was what she didn't have – she didn't have any children. Anybody can see that this is a recipe for trouble.

The Chinese language uses ideograms which are symbols used to convey certain ideas. For example, the character for woman plus the character for "child" combine to form the word "lovely." The character for woman plus the character for "roof" combine to form the ideogram for "peace."

To Chinese, a woman in the home gives peace, but two of the characters for woman combine to form the ideogram for "quarrel" and two of the characters for woman drawn under the character for roof form the ideogram for "trouble". (1)

There was a lot of trouble in this house.

The story continues with verse 3, ***"Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord.***

4Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice; he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters.

5But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.

6Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

7This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. (1 Samuel 1:3-7, NIV)

Hannah had several things going on. She couldn't have children, her husband not only had another wife, but he made it plain that loved Hannah more. Then, the other wife kept rubbing salt into the wound by reminding Hannah she couldn't have children. On top of that, Hannah couldn't stop crying, couldn't eat and was deeply depressed. You think you've got problems!

Let me just say for a moment my heart goes out to those who would love to have children but for some reason can't. There is no requirement biblically for a woman to be a wife or mother to be used by the Lord.

What I want you to see is that in the midst of all this, Hannah worshipped the Lord regularly. Year after year they would go to the temple and sacrifice to the Lord. It wasn't the only time they went to the tabernacle, but this was the yearly sacrifice. Even in all her frustration Hannah had made up her mind she was going to serve the Lord. She was going to be in the House of God.

We aren't told why the Lord up to this point had closed her womb, but here is one result. Hannah was driven to the point where she realized she was totally dependent on him. She realized her hope was in God, her health was from God, and she had a heart for God.

Too often we let the bad times, the tough times, and the hard times drive us to run FROM God instead of running TO God.

Instead of going to church we quit church. I want to encourage you. You may be going through one of the most frustrating times in your life right now. If you are, this would be my biblical counsel to you. Continue to serve the Lord. Continue to be an active part of the family of God.

In your frustration, keep serving the Lord.

II. In Your DESPERATION Seek the Lord

Desperation is like FRUSTRATION on steroids which was becoming increasingly unbearable to Hannah. Just so you know, in biblical days, if a woman could not have a child (particularly a son) to continue the family line, it brought great shame upon her.

In fact, people would wonder what sin or fault would cause God to close their womb? Every day all she had to do was just look at Peninnah or listen to her constant sneering and nagging and the knife in her heart just went in deeper. What does this woman do? Verse 10 says...

"In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly." (NIV)

I remember the first time I heard my mother cry. October 1, 1968, at 7:15 AM

I remember when my wife cried after our first child died.

Hannah did not waste her barrenness, nor allow her bitterness to make bad decisions. She understood that her problems were designed by God to drive her in desperation to Him. God even used her biggest rival Peninnah to drive her to into the hands of God.

Godly women pursue God. They don't quit on God because they know God will never quit on them. As you see in verse 12, ***"As she kept on praying to the Lord..."*** (I Samuel 1:12, NIV)

Many times, in life, we just need to keep on keeping on praying. So let me interject three things right here that you can do if you are in a season of waiting, based on the story of Hannah:

1). Don't lose your walk with God while you're waiting on God.

Hannah continued to walk to the temple of the Lord "year after year" in order to worship the Lord. Though she was waiting, she never lost her walk.

I have discovered in my life that the decision to continue with the Lord "no matter what" deepens my confidence, matures my faith, and purifies my worship like nothing else will. Psalm 34:1 says, ***"I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips."***

The decision to bless the Lord even in the midst of my greatest battle, to serve Him in the midst of my greatest struggle, and to walk with Him through my deepest wilderness is a pivotal decision we must all make from time to time.

Our decision to continue with the Lord regardless of whether or not our prayers are answered is one of the greatest environments for God to do His greatest work in us as we wait for Him to do something for us.

We must simply continue to walk toward Him and not away from Him.

2). Make sure your soul thirsts for the right drink.

Look at verses 12-16; *“As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. 13Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.”*

15“Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. 16Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

As Hannah continued to walk with the Lord, she continued to pray about it to the point of pouring her soul out to the Lord in deep anguish.

This is challenging to me because of the temptation we all might face to allow our soul to settle on some other things when it seems as though our prayers are not being answered. Eli assumed it was alcohol in this story. But there are other forms of drink such as a cynical attitude or a "woe is me" spirit that we can allow our souls to settle into when things aren't happening for us the way we desire.

Hannah did not do that but continued to pour out her soul to God. When we choose the same, we drink from the reservoir of the Holy Spirit and from His cup that never runs dry. Bottom line, I must choose the right things to fill my cup and satisfy my soul. It is the only way we discover what God said to Paul, *“my grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in your weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

3) Allow what provokes you, to position you to receive God’s promises.

Hannah's husband had another wife. (No time to explain polygamy in the Old Testament.) This other wife, in her jealousy and contempt, provoked, made fun of, and literally tried to hinder Hannah from worshipping the Lord in the midst of her greatest season of waiting. Scripture is clear, ***"This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat."*** (V7)

I am reminded that we too have a rival. We have an enemy of our soul that will try to provoke us during our season of waiting, even on our way to church on Sunday mornings! The devil will whisper, "What's the point of even going to church this morning? When is the last time God answered your prayer or did anything for you?" Our flesh will scream at us when we pray about something again and again, "What's the point of praying? Isn't it about time you stopped waiting on God?"

This only added to Hannah's anguish, as it does our own, yet she did not allow what provoked her the most to keep her from God's presence. In fact, what provoked her the most positioned her to receive the promise.

Verse 9 says ***"Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house."*** Hannah got up after being provoked to worship God, only to find Eli the priest there. Eli is the one who, after understanding Hannah was not drunk, spoke a blessing over her that released the promise of God into her life. And it was there by the doorpost of the temple that this took place.

The bottom line is this, what provokes us the most can bring us to the doorpost of the house of the Lord.

The truth is, God delayed answering Hannah's prayer because He had a greater purpose in mind for her, and for her child, than she could ever realize. Could the same be true of us? Could it be that the delay we are experiencing is a divine delay for a greater purpose? I believe so; **we must allow what provokes us the most to position us the most for the greater purpose God has in mind.**

We should never ever get tired of praying to God, because sometimes God has to something *in* you *before* He can do something *for* you.

I am not trying to spoil the ending but let's go ahead and see what God does.

"So, in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him." (I Samuel 1:20, NIV)

She has a baby and what does she name him? Samuel, which means "heard by God" or "ask of God." Every time Hannah called his name she remembered it was God that gave her that boy. Every time Samuel heard his name, he was reminded he was the result of a mother's prayer.

In your frustration serve the Lord...In your desperation seek the Lord.

III. In Your CELEBRATION Surrender to The Lord

Hannah got to a point of deep surrender "over the course of time." (V11) It is true that what provokes us can position us for something greater, but this truth hinges on our surrender.

We must surrender to the work God is trying to do in us AS we wait, and then surrender to the work God desires to do through us BECAUSE of our wait.

There is an interesting verse in scripture that says, ***"Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning."*** (Psalm 30:5, ESV)

We have all experienced the joy of God answering our prayer, of God coming through, of God knowing the desires of our heart. Those times are great times, but they can be dangerous times. If we are not careful it is in those times, we forget the Lord.

We know that Hannah is praying, but we haven't really heard what she prayed. ***"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.'"*** (I Samuel 1:11, NIV)

Now this is the first recorded prayer by a woman in the Bible! It is not just a prayer of supplication where she is asking God for something. It is a prayer of surrender where she is giving God something. She said, "God, if you give me a son, I will give him right back to you."

There is a great lesson to learn about anything you ever pray for. Whatever you ask from God, be willing to give back to God. WHY?

Because if you don't then what God gives you may become your idol. **You must always show God that you love the GIVER more than you love the GIFT.**

God doesn't work the way we work. We think to keep something we must get it and hold on to it, but the truth is; whatever we keep for ourselves we lose, but whatever we give to God we keep.

By the way moms, do you know when you should surrender your children to the Lord? Before they are even born. At the end of day your children are really not your children, they are God's children, and they belong to him. I want you to notice she gave this boy to the Lord fully. [Baby Dedication]

Now it seems strange that no razor would ever be used on his head. What does that mean? She was going to give him to be what was known as a Nazarite.

They were special people who had been given over to God, in a special way for a special purpose. This was a tremendous promise that Hannah was making.

A Nazarite was not allowed to cut his hair, drink wine, or even touch a dead body. Everything about him - his appearance, his appetite, and even his affection was to be dedicated completely to God. You normally see anyone who took a Nazarite vow would keep this vow for thirty days.

The longest might be a hundred days, but Hannah did what very few mothers had ever done. She dedicated Samuel to the Lord for his entire life. There are three life-long Nazarites in the Bible: Samson, John the Baptist and Samuel.

"When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, 'After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always.'" (1 Samuel 1:21-22, NIV)

Now this is a very important part of the story that a lot of people overlook. Normally, the weaning process was about three years in duration. Hannah spent the first three years giving all her attention and all her affection to this little boy. We now know that the first three years of a child's life is extremely important.

In the first year of life, babies develop fifty percent of their potential and positive attachment to their world. In other words, by the end of the first year of life, children have learned half of all they will ever know about some of the most crucial issues relating to other people; whether they are loved, whether they are special, and who they can trust.

In the second year of life, a child learns half as much as the first year and during the third year they learn half as much again. In other words, eighty-seven percent of everything a child will learn about relating to himself and others has been internalized before his fourth birthday. (3)

Hannah spent those three years pouring into that little boy a love for God, and getting him ready for the life she had prayed for. Did it work? Were those years' worth the effort? Let's see the result.

"After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, 'Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.

So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.' And he worshipped the Lord there." (1 Samuel 1:24-28, NIV)

Do you see the very last sentence, ***"And he worshipped the Lord there."*** Who worshipped the Lord? Samuel. Even at that young tender early age he was worshipping the Lord. Hannah could look in the mirror and say, "Mission accomplished."

I would say to every mother and dad here the number one thing you should pray for your children is not for them to be rich, famous, or successful. The number one thing you should pray for your children is they would walk in the truth of God, have a passionate love for God, and live a life devoted to God.

Samuel's story starts (literally) with the story of his mother, Hannah. Hannah, like so many women, desperately desired a child but was unable to conceive. But she never let go of her hope, or the Lord, and the Bible says in 1 Samuel

chapter 1, verse 20, ***"in the course of time"*** Hannah conceived and gave birth to a child.

Ah...time... it's not a word we like, because we want what we want, and we want it NOW! I think we can all relate. However, look at what David says in Psalm 31:14-15:

"But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God. My times are in your hands;"

I think that we can all agree that if our times are in the hands of the Lord, then time is not our FOE, it is our FRIEND. The truth is, God does His best work in us, through us, and for us OVER THE COURSE OF TIME.

For Hannah, she gave birth to a son that would be instrumental in the history of the entire Israelite nation. I don't have time to go to into it now, but surrender is key to the entire journey of waiting.

CONCLUSION:

Just a final thought; Hannah surrendered Samuel to the Lord in what was known as a Nazarite vow. Samuel would be dedicated to the Lord and Hannah wouldn't raise him in the traditional way. However, 1 Samuel 2:21 says, ***"And the Lord was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord."***

Here is my final thought: ***"Sometimes what we surrender to the Lord in one season, He will multiply in the next."***

The result of Hannah's weeping was the birth of Samuel—the mighty prophet who unified the tribes of Israel, and anointed its first two kings – Saul and David.

Never, Never, Never, never underestimate the power of a praying mother.

Without Hannah, ultimately, we do not have David and the royal line that ends in Jesus. God used these mothers to change human history.

Is there any desperate passion in us like Hannah had? Do we weep over the lost and hurting? Are we really concerned about spiritual barrenness—that people aren't coming to Christ?

Hannah wept, and from her passion in intercession came a spiritual giant that changed the destiny of the nation of Israel. What will result from our tears? Will we believe that from our travail, God will birth a glorious future in us?

But for now, let's pray the prayer, **"Lord, help me to remain surrendered to you as I wait. Help me to continue to walk with you, worship you, and keep my soul centered on you as I wait. I choose to surrender to your greater purposes for my life, no matter what."**

endnotes

(1) John Phillips, Exploring People of the Old Testament, 285.

(2) Success.com/15-Inspiring-quotes-about-never-giving-up/

(3) Ken Magid and Carole McKelvey, High Risk: Children without Conscience (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 71-73

