

## "Hannah, a great role model"

In a world which seeks to have role models, some good and some not so good, the Christians I believe some of the great role models are found within the pages of the Bible. In the Old Testament for example, this contains many role models for us today, we have great men such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, remembering that their lives were far from perfect and they didn't always please God.

But we also find great women such as Sarah, Ruth, Esther, today we are going to look at another great role for a Christian woman and her name is Hannah.

Please take a moment to read [1 Samuel 1:1-2:10](#).

From the text we learn that Hannah was the mother of Samuel who was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. And very quickly we can see that Hannah was indeed a great woman of faith whose example is worth imitating.

It's always nice to be reminded that even the greatest role models had to endure real problems, like so many of us have to face today, we may not have the exact same problem but it's a problem nonetheless.

[What were Hannah's problems?](#) Well basically her womb was closed by the Lord.

[1 Samuel 1:1-5](#) "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. 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. Whenever 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. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb."

We also see when we read on that she was being provoked by her rival.

[1 Samuel 1:6-8](#) "And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 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. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

So again we see that just because a person has faith, doesn't mean that they won't have any real problems to deal with.

Hannah was very much like Sarah who also suffered ridicule from her maidservant Hagar.

[Genesis 16:3-5](#) "So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me."

Now if we learn anything from Sarah and Hannah, it's simply this, we should never let anyone get in the way of our trusting in God. Hannah could have used her circumstances and the way she was being treated as an excuse for not trusting in God, but she didn't, she never lost sight of God and continued to trust Him and worship Him.

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1 Samuel 1:7 "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".

If you take a moment to read 1 Samuel 1:9-18, you will not only be reminded that all godly woman have problems but you will see that the biggest difference is how they go about dealing with those problems.

So many people want to leave God out of the picture when they are faced with problems but godly woman will do the opposite, they will run to God for help with those problems. Hannah did exactly that through prayer.

Even though she was suffering, and we know she was suffering because the text says, she prayed with the bitterness of her soul and weeping in anguish. 1 Samuel 1:10 "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord".

She prayed with her mind totally trusting in God which can be seen in her vow to the Lord in 1 Samuel 1:11 "And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon 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."

She remained focused on God and not her problems because she continued to pray to God. 1 Samuel 1:12 "As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth".

She also didn't just pray any old things which were on her mind, she prayed from her heart. 1 Samuel 1:13 "Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk"

She prayed in her heart and she also prayed with all of her soul. 1 Samuel 1:15-16 "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. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Hannah was intensely praying to God with everything she was because despite her circumstances and all her trials and so again she didn't let those circumstances and trials get in the way of her God. She prayed with absolute faith that her God would stand by His promise. 1 Samuel 1:18 "She said, "May your servant find favour in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast."

We need to remember as Christians we don't have to go through anything alone but we need to remind ourselves to go to God in truthful, heartfelt prayer regularly. Colossians 4:2 "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Like Hannah we need to pray in faith and believe that God will answer our prayers. 1 John 5:14-15 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him".

Time and time again we see God listening to our prayers and also answering our prayers. 1 Samuel 1:19 "Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her."

You see when often feel like our prayers are falling on deaf ears but if we continue to pray we should have confidence that God hears and He will act accordingly to our requests.

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God heard Hannah's prayers and He acted accordingly to answer that prayer, she was blessed with a son, named Samuel, whose name means, 'heard of God.' 1 Samuel 1:20 "So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

Now let's be sensible hear, this doesn't mean that God will always give us everything we pray for because we need to remember that our requests may not be in line with His will for us. 1 John 5:14 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

If we don't run to God with our problems and run to the world for answers, we may not stay in Christ and we know that we need to stay in Christ for Him to answer our prayers. John 15:7 "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."

Sometimes we pray for things which are totally for our own benefits, almost selfish reasons, these prayers again won't be answered. James 4:3 "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures".

And so if we pray to God we need to understand that God will always provide what we need, not always what we want. But we should have the confidence to know that however God answers our prayers, it will certainly meet our needs and be for our own good. Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well".

Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Hannah was blessed because her God heard her prayers and He blessed her with a son and remember, she made a vow to God. It's all very well us relying on God to hold up His end of the promise but it's another thing for us to uphold our end of our promises to God.

Was Hannah planning to keep her promise? 1 Samuel 1:22 "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."

Yes she was certainly planning to keep her promise to God and as we can see when we read on, she certainly did keep her promise. 1 Samuel 1:24-28 "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 they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, 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 worshiped the Lord there."

Now we shouldn't understand what's happened here as if Hannah was somewhat bargaining with God. If God will do this then I will do that. There are many instances of people making vows to God within the Scriptures and if anyone makes some sort of vow to God, they need to ensure that they go through with it, otherwise God will see you as a fool.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it".

As Christians today there is in a sense that our 'yes' and 'no' are as solemn vows. Matthew 5:33-37 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven,

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for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

James 5:12 "Above all, my brothers, do not swear-not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned."

And so if our God answers our prayers and we too should worship our God with thanksgiving even more as He delivers on His promise to us. Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

As we come to end of our study, we see Hannah praying again to God with thanksgiving 1 Samuel 2:1-10, but before we look at the text, let's read the words of Mary in Luke 1 and we will just see how similar they are to Hannah's prayer.

Luke 1:46-55 "And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me- holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

I believe that women are so much better at expressing themselves to God than men are. Both Mary and Hannah had no trouble in expressing their heartfelt thanks to God for what He had done and was doing.

It's amazing how He so quickly go to God in prayer with our requests but so slowly go back to Him in prayer with thanksgiving after He has answered our prayers. Hannah prayer with great joy in her heart. 1 Samuel 2:1 "Then Hannah prayed and said: "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."

She recognised that God had heard her prayer, and it was God who answered her prayer and she just couldn't do anything but just praise God for His help. 1 Samuel 2:2-10 "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by his deeds are weighed. "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. "The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. "For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Like I said earlier, its one thing to remember to go to God in prayer when we're facing problems and it's another thing to remember to go back to Him and thank Him when He blesses us, just as Hannah did. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Be joyful always."

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We need to remember that it's not just giving thanks to God for answered prayers but it's also a promise to continue to praise God from that day forward. We see David doing this in **Psalm 18:49** "Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Lord; I will sing praises to your name."

And remember praising God is one way the Christian offers our spiritual sacrifices up to God. **Hebrews 13:15** "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name."

And so remember all the godly women we find within Scriptures and many Christian women today all have learned to do what Hannah did with her problems. They have poured out their hearts and souls to God in prayer in trust.

They have learned to recognise when God has delivered them from their problems and recognised that they need to remain faithful always. They also remember that when God answers their prayers they will always stop to give Him thanks and continue to worship Him all the days of their lives.

And so let me encourage you, if you're going through some trials at the moment or have some problems in your life, go to God in prayer like Hannah and so many others did and with God's help, you will be able to say those wonderful words which Hannah said in **1 Samuel 2:1** "My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord."