



## The Birth of Samuel (1 Sam 1)

*Notes: Week One*

### 1 Samuel 1 (HCSB)

#### Hannah's Vow

**1** There was a man from Ramathaim-zophim in<sup>[a]</sup> the hill country of Ephraim. His name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. **2** He had two wives, the first named Hannah and the second Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. **3** This man would go up from his town every year to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh, where Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were the LORD's priests.

**4** Whenever Elkanah offered a sacrifice, he always gave portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to each of her sons and daughters. **5** But he gave a double<sup>[b]</sup> portion to Hannah, for he loved her even though the LORD had kept her from conceiving. **6** Her rival would taunt her severely just to provoke her, because the LORD had kept Hannah from conceiving. **7** Whenever she went up to the LORD's house, her rival taunted her in this way every year. Hannah wept and would not eat. **8** "Hannah, why are you crying?" her husband Elkanah asked. "Why won't you eat? Why are you troubled? Am I not better to you than 10 sons?"

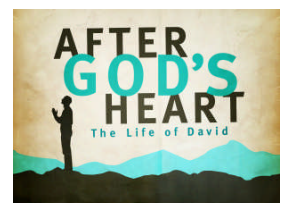
**9** Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh.<sup>[c]</sup> Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's tabernacle. **10** Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. **11** Making a vow, she pleaded, "LORD of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son,<sup>[d]</sup> I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."<sup>[e]</sup>

**12** While she continued praying in the LORD's presence, Eli watched her lips.<sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying silently,<sup>[f]</sup> and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk **14** and scolded her, "How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!"

**15** "No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven't had any wine or beer; I've been pouring out my heart before the LORD. **16** Don't think of me as a wicked woman; I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment."

**17** Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you've requested from Him."

**18** "May your servant find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.<sup>[g]</sup>



## Samuel's Birth and Dedication

<sup>19</sup> The next morning Elkanah and Hannah got up early to bow in worship before the LORD. Afterward, they returned home to Ramah. Then Elkanah was intimate with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup> After some time, <sup>[h]</sup> Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, <sup>[i]</sup> because she said, "I requested him from the LORD."

<sup>21</sup> When Elkanah and all his household went up to make the annual sacrifice and his vow offering to the LORD, <sup>22</sup> Hannah did not go and explained to her husband, "After the child is weaned, I'll take him to appear in the LORD's presence and to stay there permanently."

<sup>23</sup> Her husband Elkanah replied, "Do what you think is best, <sup>[i]</sup> and stay here until you've weaned him. May the LORD confirm your <sup>[k]</sup> word." So Hannah stayed there and nursed her son until she weaned him. <sup>24</sup> When she had weaned him, she took him with her to Shiloh, as well as a three-year-old bull, <sup>[l]</sup> half a bushel <sup>[m]</sup> of flour, and a jar of wine. Though the boy was still young, <sup>[n]</sup> she took him to the LORD's house at Shiloh. <sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli.

<sup>26</sup> "Please, my lord," she said, "as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked Him for, <sup>28</sup> I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he <sup>[o]</sup> bowed in worship to the LORD there. <sup>[p]</sup>

### Footnotes:

- a. [1 Samuel 1:1](#) Or from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from
- b. [1 Samuel 1:5](#) Or gave only one; Hb obscure
- c. [1 Samuel 1:9](#) LXX adds and presented herself before the LORD
- d. [1 Samuel 1:11](#) Lit a seed of men
- e. [1 Samuel 1:11](#) Lit and no razor will go up on his head
- f. [1 Samuel 1:13](#) Lit praying to her heart
- g. [1 Samuel 1:18](#) Lit and her face was not to her again
- h. [1 Samuel 1:20](#) Lit In the turning of the days
- i. [1 Samuel 1:20](#) In Hb, the name Samuel sounds like the phrase "requested from God."
- j. [1 Samuel 1:23](#) Lit what is good in your eyes
- k. [1 Samuel 1:23](#) DSS, LXX, Syr; MT reads His
- l. [1 Samuel 1:24](#) DSS, LXX, Syr; MT reads Shiloh with three bulls
- m. [1 Samuel 1:24](#) Lit bull and an ephah
- n. [1 Samuel 1:24](#) Lit And the youth was a youth
- o. [1 Samuel 1:28](#) DSS read she; some Hb mss, Syr, Vg read they
- p. [1 Samuel 1:28](#) LXX reads Then she left him there before the LORD

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Samuel 1

**1:1** The exact location of Ramathaim-zophim is not known, but it is distinct from Ramah, located in the tribal territory of Benjamin ([v. 19](#)). It probably designates Elkanah's ancestral home. The name Elkanah means "God has acquired." Ephraimite denotes Elkanah's place of residence, not his tribal background, which was that of Levi ([1Ch 6:25-28](#)).

**1:2** The name Hannah means "grace." She was childless, a condition often viewed with disfavor or even anguish ([Gen 16:4-5](#); [30:1](#); [Lk 1:24-25](#)).

**1:3** Shiloh was centrally located about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. It was the place from which Joshua divided the land among the tribes ([Jos 18:1-10](#)).

**1:5** The double portion was the amount of the inheritance the firstborn received ([Dt 21:17](#)). Here it probably denotes Elkanah's special love for Hannah. The words the LORD had kept her from conceiving is literally, "Yahweh had closed her womb" (cp. [v. 6](#)).

**1:6** The rivalry between Hannah and Peninnah finds parallels in the accounts of Sarah and Hagar ([Gen 16:4-5](#)) and Leah and Rachel ([Gen 30:14-16](#)).

**1:10** The words deeply hurt can be more literally rendered "bitter of soul," using the same Hebrew word that Naomi used (*mara*; [Ru 1:20](#)).

**1:11** If God would give Hannah a son, she vowed to give him back to God according to the law of the Nazirite ([Num 6:1-21](#)).

**1:12-14** Eli misread Hannah's anguish as drunkenness and scolded her for her apparent disregard of the holy place.

**1:15-16** Hannah immediately clarified the situation with Eli. The depth (lit "abundance") of Hannah's anguish and resentment over her situation had come to the surface.

**1:18** The Hebrew word for favor with which Hannah replied was a shortened form of her own name.

**1:19** Ramah lay along the major north-south highway five miles north of Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin. The tender words the LORD remembered her remind the reader that ultimately it is God who brings new life within the womb. In the OT, to "remember" means not simply to think about someone but to act on their behalf (see note at [Gen 8:1](#)).

**1:20** The name Samuel may be a wordplay meaning "requested from God." A second possibility is the meaning "heard by God."

**1:21** The expression annual sacrifice literally means "sacrifice of the days" and probably designates one of the three required festivals—Passover, the Festival of Weeks, or the Festival of Booths ([Dt 16:16](#)). The word vow may denote a separate vow that Elkanah had made, or perhaps it designates Hannah's vow that Elkanah then shared with her when he heard of it ([Num 30:10-15](#)).

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 1".

[1:22](#) The apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees ([7:27](#)) suggests Israelite children were weaned at around age three, a custom not unusual in societies where homes lacked running water and where the purity of drinking water was difficult to maintain.

[1:23](#) The Hebrew verb translated confirm literally means "cause to stand." Elkanah wanted God's blessing to remain on the young boy Samuel.

[1:24](#) The Masoretic Text, overall the most reliable Hebrew manuscript tradition, reads "three bulls" here. The HCSB adopted three-year-old bull because of the reference to a single bull in [verse 25](#) and because of the testimony of other early manuscripts. If the Masoretic Text is correct, however, it may be that the one bull constituted Elkanah's sacrifice of thanksgiving for Samuel's birth, while the other two were part of his usual sacrifice, and hence were not mentioned in [verse 25](#).

[1:25](#) On bull, see note at [verse 24](#).

[1:26-27](#) Hannah thought it important to testify to Eli, Israel's high priest, how God had answered her prayer.

[1:28](#) The Hebrew words translated give and given are related to the Hebrew word for "requested," which also has to do with the meaning of Samuel's name ([v. 20](#)). They literally mean "to give over" or "to grant" what was requested. Hannah had received the son she requested; she now grants him to the LORD for His service.

## English Standard Version - *Study Bible*<sup>2</sup>

### 1 Samuel 1

[1:1-7:17](#) ***The Story of Samuel.*** The birth of Samuel is God's answer to the prayer of a childless woman; he is also the answer to Israel's need for a prophet who will give God's guidance to his people in their transition from the period of the judges to the period of the kings.

[1:1-4:1a](#) ***Rise of Samuel as Prophet.*** Like the book of Ruth, 1-2 Samuel begins with the story of an ordinary Israelite family during the period of the judges. Through one woman's grief and faith, a child is born who will be instrumental in leading Israel to the next phase of its history, the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. This section also contains the "Song of Hannah," the prototype of the Magnificat (the "Song of Mary" in [Luke 1:46-55](#)). The story of another family appears here too. The Lord is worshiped, with sacrifices, at the sanctuary of Shiloh. The priesthood is descended from Aaron. Although Eli the head priest is a good man, he has weaknesses, especially in controlling his sons. They have no interest in the demands of God, only in what they get from their position. This section alternates between passages about the growth of the boy (Hb. *na'ar*) Samuel and passages proclaiming the evil of the young men (also *na'ar*, in plural), the sons of Eli. The two themes come together when the Lord gives young Samuel his first message as a prophet, announcing judgment on the house of Eli. The section ends with the statement that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord before all Israel.

[1:1-28](#) ***Birth and Dedication of Samuel.*** Hannah, who has been barren, gives birth to Samuel and dedicates him to serve at the sanctuary.

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2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 1".

**1:1 Ramathaim-zophim** is called Ramah in [v. 19](#) and [2:11](#). Samuel later lived there ([7:17](#); [8:4](#); [25:1](#)), and it is presumably the city in the land of **Zuph** (named after Samuel's ancestor Zuph) where Saul meets him ([9:5](#)).

**1:2 two wives.** Probably **Hannah** was Elkanah's first wife, since she is named first. Presumably he married **Peninnah** because Hannah was barren; lack of an heir was a major problem in the ancient Near East, as in many other societies. Taking a second wife was one way to try to solve the problem ([Gen. 16:2](#)), as was levirate marriage (see note on [Matt. 22:24](#); also [Gen. 38:8](#); [Deut. 25:6](#)). Elkanah's pedigree suggests that it would be important to him to have an heir to continue the family and also that he was prosperous enough to afford a second marriage.

**1:3 year by year.** This may have been an annual family or clan gathering, celebrated by all its members, including women and children, such as the one later held by David's family ([20:6](#)). **the LORD of hosts.** This is the first appearance in the Bible of the title "the LORD of hosts," to whom Elkanah sacrifices and Hannah prays ([1:11](#)) at Shiloh. The title is used in Samuel several times and very frequently in the Psalms and the Prophets. "Hosts" (Hb. *tseba'ot*) is probably the plural of an abstract noun meaning something like "plentifulness" or "numberlessness." Hence, it refers to numerous entities such as heavenly bodies ([Isa. 40:26](#)), angelic beings ([Josh. 5:14](#), "army of the LORD"), the armies of Israel ([1 Sam. 17:45](#)), or all creatures ([Gen. 2:1](#)). The title may originally have been particularly connected with worship at the Shiloh sanctuary (see [1 Sam. 4:4](#)), in which case "hosts" would probably have referred to angelic beings, portrayed as God's "armies." **Shiloh**, the modern Khirbet Seilun, is 20 miles (32 km) north of Jerusalem, toward the eastern border of Ephraim. The tent of meeting was set up there in [Josh. 18:1](#). The city also appears in [Judg. 21:19-24](#) as the place from which the Benjaminites took their brides. Its destruction, presumably at the time of the events of [1 Samuel 4](#), is mentioned in [Ps. 78:60](#) and [Jer. 7:12-14](#).

**1:4 portions.** Elkanah's sacrifice is a "peace offering," in which parts of the sacrificial animal are burned, parts are given to the priest, and parts are eaten by the people who brought the sacrifice ([Lev. 7:11-36](#); see also [1 Sam. 2:12-17](#)).

**1:5 a double portion.** The Hebrew is difficult here, literally "two noses as one portion," perhaps referring to two heads of sacrificed sheep. In ritual texts from the city of Emar, the head of a sacrificial animal is treated as a favored part. This probably means that Hannah was given a "double portion," possibly also of the most favored part.

**1:6 her rival used to provoke her.** Cf. Hagar's attitude towards Sarah after she became pregnant ([Gen. 16:4](#)).

**1:7, 9 house of the LORD... temple of the LORD.** Was this a "tent," or was it a building with solid walls? The word "house" refers to a dwelling without specifying the material. In [2 Sam. 7:2](#) David says that "the ark of God dwells in a tent," and in [2 Sam. 7:6](#) the Lord says, "I have not lived in a house... to this day." In [2 Samuel 7](#) the contrast is between a tent (i.e., a house of cloth) and a house of cedar. In [1 Sam. 2:22](#) there is a reference to the "tent of meeting," while "doorpost of the temple" ([1:9](#)) and "opened the doors" ([3:15](#)) suggest more of a building. Perhaps there was a more solid structure around a cloth structure. The word for "temple" (Hb. *hekal*) derives from the Sumerian word *egal*, meaning "big house." There are cases in Ugaritic and Mari documents where it in fact refers to a large and complex tent structure.

**1:8** Elkanah is truly concerned for his wife, but the history of Israel at this point turns on Hannah's actions and the Lord's response. **Am I not more to you than ten sons?** Elkanah attempts to comfort Hannah, though he seems not to understand Hannah's deep yearning for a child.

**1:9** The **seat** was a symbol of Eli's authority; normally people sat on the ground.

**1:11 I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life** seems to mean that Hannah will dedicate her son as a Nazirite. According to [Numbers 6](#), people might make a special vow to separate themselves to the Lord for a time. This involved letting **no razor... touch one's head**, eating nothing from the grapevine, and not going near a dead body. Hannah mentions only the razor in the text, but that part of the vow probably stood for the whole of the regulations. According to [Lev. 27:1-8](#), a person as young as a month old could be vowed to the Lord, apparently to work in the temple. The Leviticus passage deals with redeeming someone who has been dedicated, but Hannah does not intend to redeem her son.

**1:12-19** Eli shows his piety in rebuking Hannah, whom he takes to be **drunk** (which would be an offense to the sanctuary). But Hannah explains that her visible display of emotion is genuine, due to deep anguish. Eli acknowledges his mistake and blesses Hannah—a blessing that proves effective.

**1:20** The most natural meaning of the name **Samuel** is “name of God,” or possibly “offspring of God.” Samuel bore the name of God, who gave him to Hannah.

**1:23** Elkanah has been in the background, but he supports Hannah and participates in the dedication ([v. 25](#); [2:11](#)).

**1:24** Either a **three-year-old bull** or “three bulls” (ESV footnote). In either case Elkanah apparently was a prosperous man who was able to afford an expensive offering of a bull or bulls and large amounts of grain and **wine**. Three bulls would correspond to the priestly regulations, which specify that together with each bull sacrificed, three-tenths of an ephah of grain should be offered ([Num. 15:9](#); [28:12](#), [20](#), [28](#)). With three bulls, one would expect an offering of nine-tenths of an ephah, just a little less than the one ephah that Hannah offered. The **skin** (or “jar”) may have held as much as 6 gallons (22 l) of wine. The reference to the **child** anticipates references to “the boy” (the Hb. word in both cases is *na'ar*) in [1 Sam. 2:11](#).

**1:25 the bull.** See note on [v. 24](#).

**1:26 As you live**, or “as your soul lives,” is a common form of oath ([2 Sam. 11:11](#); [14:19](#)), as is the phrase “as the LORD lives” (see [1 Sam. 14:39](#); [26:16](#); [Jer. 16:14-15](#)). The two were often combined ([1 Sam. 20:3](#); [25:26](#); [2 Kings 2:2](#)).

**1:27 And the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him** repeats almost verbatim Eli's blessing in [v. 17](#). Joyously, Hannah points to **this child** as the answer to her prayer. The words “petition” (here and [v. 17](#)), “asked” ([v. 20](#)), and “lent” ([v. 28](#) twice) are all from the verbal root *sha'al*, so a wordplay may be intended.

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### 1 Samuel 1

**1:1** The book of 1 Samuel begins in the days when the judges still ruled Israel, possibly during the closing years of Samson's life. Samuel was Israel's last judge and the first priest and prophet to serve during the time of a king. He was the best example of what a good judge should be, governing the people by God's word and not by his own impulses. Samuel was the man who anointed Saul as Israel's first king.

**1:2** Although many great Old Testament leaders (such as Abraham, Jacob, and David) had more than one wife, this was not God's original intention for marriage. Genesis 2:24 states that in marriage, two people become one flesh. Why then did polygamy exist among God's people? First, it was to produce more offspring to help in a man's work and to assure the continuation of a man's family line. Numerous children were a symbol of status and wealth. Second, in societies where many young men were killed in battle, polygamy became an accepted way of supporting women who otherwise would have remained unmarried and, very likely, destitute. Nevertheless, polygamy often caused serious family problems, as we see in this story of Hannah and Peninnah.

**1:3** The Tabernacle was located at Shiloh, the religious center of the nation (see Joshua 18:1). Three times a year all Israelite men were required to attend a religious feast held at the Tabernacle: the Passover with the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of First Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters (Deuteronomy 16:16). Elkanah made this pilgrimage regularly to fulfill God's commands. (See Exodus 23:14-17 for the regulations concerning the pilgrimage, and see the note on Exodus 40:34 for more on the Tabernacle.)

**1:6** Hannah had been unable to conceive children, and in Old Testament times, a childless woman was considered a failure. Her barrenness was a social embarrassment for her husband. Children were a very important part of the society's economic structure. They were a source of labor for the family, and it was their duty to care for their parents in their old age. If a wife could not bear children, she was often obligated by ancient Middle Eastern custom to give one of her servant girls to her husband to bear children for her. Although Elkanah could have left Hannah (a husband was permitted to divorce a barren wife), he remained lovingly devoted to her despite social criticism and his rights under civil law.

**1:7** Part of God's plan for Hannah involved postponing her years of childbearing. While Peninnah and Elkanah looked at Hannah's outward circumstances, God was moving ahead with his plan. Think of those in your world who are struggling with God's timing in answering their prayers and who need your love and help. By supporting those who are struggling, you may help them remain steadfast in their faith and confident in his timing to bring fulfillment to their lives.

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 407.



*The Journey to Shiloh*

Each year Elkanah and his family traveled from their home at Ramah to Shiloh, where they worshiped and sacrificed at God's Tabernacle.

**1:8** Hannah knew her husband loved her, but even his encouragement could not comfort her. She could not keep from listening to Peninnah's jeers and letting Peninnah's words erode her self-confidence. Although we cannot keep others from unjustly criticizing us, we can choose how we will react to their hurtful words. Rather than dwelling upon our problems, we can enjoy the loving relationships God has given us. By so doing, we can exchange self-pity for hope.

**1:10** Hannah had good reason to feel discouraged and bitter. She was unable to bear children; she shared her husband with a woman who ridiculed her (**1:7**); her loving husband could not solve her problem (**1:8**); and even the high priest misunderstood her motives (**1:14**). But instead of retaliating or giving up hope, Hannah prayed. She brought her problem honestly before God.

Each of us may face times of barrenness when nothing "comes to birth" in our work, service, or relationships. It is difficult to pray in faith when we feel so ineffective. But, as Hannah discovered, prayer opens the way for God to work (**1:19, 20**).

**1:11** Be careful what you promise in prayer because God may take you up on it. Hannah so desperately wanted a child that she was willing to strike a bargain with God. God took her up on her promise, and to Hannah's credit, she did her part, even though it was painful (**1:27, 28**).

Although we are not in a position to barter with God, he may still choose to answer a prayer that has an attached promise. When you pray, ask yourself, Will I follow through on any promises I make to God if he grants my request? It is dishonest and dangerous to ignore a promise, especially to God. God keeps his promises, and he expects you to keep yours.



# Elkanah & Peninnah

Husbands can be insensitive for many reasons, but often they simply suffer from ignorance. Elkanah had two wives, which doubled his opportunities to seem insensitive. His wife Peninnah was able to give Elkanah many children. The other wife, Hannah, owned Elkanah's heart but was unable to get pregnant. Peninnah, jealous that providing Elkanah with heirs didn't turn his affections toward her, treated Hannah with disdain. Yet Elkanah seemed oblivious to the turmoil around him.

Although the events leading up to the birth of Samuel primarily involved Hannah, both Elkanah and Peninnah played significant roles. Peninnah's competitiveness and derision drove Hannah to prayer; Elkanah's simple love allowed Hannah to entrust their child Samuel into God's care. Elkanah didn't realize how much a little attention toward Peninnah could have cooled the simmering emotions in his home. Nor did he understand that his love for Hannah didn't make up for the emptiness of her womb.

The glimpse God gives us of that tense household provides a helpful backdrop for God's purposes, which are not thwarted by human shortcomings. He worked within the strain and stress of those relationships to bring Samuel into the world—one of the most significant figures in the Old Testament. When our relational systems seem too gnarled to be unraveled or salvaged, we need to remember that God not only displays his creativity by making things from scratch, but also by bringing order and beauty out of messes.

## Strengths and accomplishments

- Elkanah supported Hannah's decision to leave Samuel in Shiloh to be raised as a priest
- Regular trips to Shiloh acknowledged God's importance to the entire family

## Weaknesses and mistakes

- Elkanah did not understand what would have helped each of his wives
- Peninnah made things worse by taking out her disappointment and anger on Hannah

## Lessons from their lives

- Ignorance is not a good excuse for insensitivity
- Jealousy is not a good excuse for bad behavior
- God works in the middle of family messes

## Vital statistics

- Where: Ramah
- Occupation: Unknown
- Relatives: Elkanah and Peninnah had an unknown number of children; Elkanah and Hannah bore two daughters and four sons, including Samuel.
- Contemporary: Eli the priest

## Key verse

"Why are you crying, Hannah?' Elkanah would ask. 'Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?'" ([1 Samuel 1:8](#)).

Their story is told in [1 Samuel 1-2](#).

**1:18** Earlier Hannah had been discouraged to the point of being physically sick and unable to eat. At this point, she returned home well and happy. The change in her attitude may be attributed to three factors: (1) She honestly prayed to God ([1:11](#)); (2) she received encouragement from Eli ([1:17](#)); (3) she resolved to leave the problem with God ([1:18](#)). This is the antidote for discouragement: Tell God how you really feel and leave your problems with him. Then rely upon the support of good friends and counselors.

**1:26-28** To do what she promised ([1:11](#)), Hannah gave up what she wanted most—her son—and presented him to Eli to serve in the house of the Lord. In dedicating her only son to God, Hannah was dedicating her entire life and future to God. Because Samuel's life was from God, Hannah was not really giving him up. Rather, she was returning him to God, who had given Samuel to Hannah in the first place. These verses illustrate the kinds of gifts we should give to God. Do your gifts cost you little (Sunday mornings, a comfortable tithe), or are they gifts of sacrifice? Are you presenting God with tokens, or are you presenting him with your entire life?

**1:28** Samuel was probably three years old—the customary age for weaning—when his mother left him at the Tabernacle. By saying, "I am giving him to the LORD," Hannah meant that she was dedicating Samuel to God for lifetime service. She did not, of course, forget her much-wanted son. She visited him regularly, and each year she brought him a robe just like Eli's ([2:19](#)). In later years, Samuel lived in Ramah ([7:17](#)), his parents' hometown ([1:19, 20](#)).

# Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

## A Principle to Live By 1 Samuel #1: Marital Relationships

from [1 Samuel 1:1-8](#)

**To experience marital fulfillment as God intended, we must practice the one man—one woman plan instituted in the Garden of Eden.**

Just as Jacob loved and favored Rachael more than Leah, Elkanah loved and favored Hannah more than Peninnah. Because of this preferential treatment, both marriages experienced excruciating tension and intense conflict. To complicate things, Hannah couldn't conceive and Peninnah could. Consequently, Peninnah taunted Hannah. Hannah felt so bad that she wept and wouldn't eat.

On Elkanah's side, he had a difficult time handling Hannah's emotional moods. The four questions he asked her ([v. 8](#)) indicate that he felt rejected:

- *Hannah, why are you crying?* (As if he didn't know.)
- *Why won't you eat?* (As if he didn't understand the reason.)
- *Why are you troubled?* (Again, as if he wasn't aware of what was happening.)
- *Am I not better to you than 10 sons?* (A reflection of his insecurity.)

Because of the sin and flagrant immorality that permeated the Old Testament world, God tolerated men having more than one wife. However, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He lifted marital relationships to a new level. The Savior came to restore what was terribly distorted in the Fall. He taught and demonstrated what true love is. As John stated,

*This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers. ([1Jn 3:16](#))*

As Christians, we have a new standard of righteousness. This is why every man who is selected to be a spiritual leader in the church should be "the husband of one wife," or more literally a "man of one woman" ([1Tm 3:2](#); [Tit 1:6](#)), and a godly woman was to be a "wife of one husband" ([1Tm 5:9](#)). This was God's ideal plan when He created Adam and Eve. When we become new creations through faith in Jesus Christ, we have the potential to more and more reflect God's love in our marital relationships.

### *Reflection and Response*

*What practical steps should we take to maintain committed moral relationships that are pleasing both to God and to each other?*

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4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 346-347.

A Principle to Live By  
1 Samuel #2: Sincere Commitments

*from [1 Samuel 1:9-18](#)*

**We should feel free to make personal commitments to God  
that are based on God's future provisions.**

Hannah's vow could have been a commitment either for a specific time or for a lifetime (see [Nm 6:1-21](#)). For her, it was the latter. If God gave her a son, she would allow him to serve the Lord all his life ([1Sm 1:11](#)).

We saw this illustrated in Jacob's life. Following his encounter with God at Bethel, he vowed to give a tenth of his material possessions to the Lord—if God provided. This indeed was a prayer of faith.

Paul outlined the New Testament basis for faith promise giving. The Corinthians made a promise to give a “generous gift” based on what God would provide ([2Co 9:1-5](#)).

*Reflection and Response*

*How can we make a commitment to God that is not manipulative and conditional but simply a promise to demonstrate our love and appreciation to Him for His mercy and grace?*