“The Example of a Godly Mother”
1 Samuel 1:1-2:11
Rev. Alan Rogers

INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes, it's hard for mothers to get respect.

There was an 4th grade teacher trying to lead a lesson on magnetism. On a pop quiz she asked the kids to name a six-letter word, starting with “m”, that picks things up. Over half the class said ...“mother.”

A four-year-old and a six-year-old gave their Mom with a house plant for Mother's Day. They had used their own money and she was thrilled. The six-year-old said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet that we wanted to give you at the flower shop, but it was too expensive. It was real pretty, and it had a ribbon on it that would have fit you perfectly: 'Rest In Peace.' You're always talking about how you'd like a little peace so that you can rest."

Being a good mother is not easy. Neither is being a father. Being a parent is at the same time one of the most rewarding and most terrifying endeavors one may undertake. Thankfully, the Bible is full of advice and examples of how to raise children. One of those examples is a godly lady named Hannah, whose story opens the book of 1 Samuel. Since today is Mother’s Day, and since Hannah was a woman, today we will focus on the example of a godly mother. However, what we learn about Hannah may be applied to all parents.

I. Godly mothers wrestle with real problems (1:1-8).

A. Some people operate under the misconception that godly people have no problems.

i. Many women are intimidated by the ideal of the Proverbs 31 woman.

ii. Many women believe such an ideal is out of reach for “real” women.
B. Hannah’s story shows that godly people are not exempt from trouble, but respond to difficulties by trusting God (1:1-8).

i. Hannah faced a long list of challenges:

a) Hannah lived in a politically and socially unstable land.

- Hannah lived during the period of history when “in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6)

- Even the religious leadership was corrupt (v. 3).
  
  - The writer makes a point to mention that Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were serving as priests at the central sanctuary (v. 3).
  
  - Hophni and Phinehas were ungodly men who had a reputation for dishonesty (2:12-17) and philandering (2:22).
  
  - However, it was through Hannah that God would set in motion the chain of events which eventually led to the selection of Israel’s first king.

b) Hannah was forced to share the attention of her husband.

- Hannah’s husband, Elkanah, had two wives (v. 2).

- While God’s plan was for marriage to consist of one man and one woman, Hannah lived in a culture where polygamy was accepted and practiced.²

- Incidentally, on most cases where the Bible describes polygamous marriages the picture is not a pleasant one (relationships characterized by strife and rivalry).

- While Elkanah loved Hannah, she and his other wife did not get along (v. 6)

² Genesis 2:18-25.
c) Hannah was infertile (v.2)

- Unfortunately for Hannah, she lived in a culture where a woman’s value was judged primarily for her ability to bear children.

- Hannah’s rival, Peninnah, had given birth to several children, and never passed up an opportunity to hold that fact over Hannah’s head (v. 6).

ii. Hannah’s problems affected her deeply (v.8).

   a) She shed tears.

   b) She refused to eat.

   c) She battled depression.

   d) Her problems affected her relationship with her husband.

iii. Hannah did not wallow in her circumstances, but took her circumstances to God (v. 9).

   a) Hannah’s family made annual trips to the central sanctuary to worship (v.3).

   b) During one of those trips, Hannah sought the Lord’s help.

II. Godly mothers pray powerful prayers (1:9-18)

   A. Hannah poured out her concerns to God, then trusted Him for the results (1:9-18).

      i. Hannah prayed so fervently that Eli the priest thought she was drunk (v. 10-14).

      ii. Hannah asked God to give her a son (v.11).

      iii. In return, Hannah promised to dedicate her son to the Lord’s service.
a) She promised to turn him over to the priests to be raised.

- Although v. 1 seems to identify Elkanah as a member of the tribe of Ephraim, many scholars now believe that he actually was a Levite who lived in Ephraim.

- As a descendent of Levi, Hannah’s son would be eligible to serve at the sanctuary.

b) She promised to bind him with a Nazirite vow from the time he was born (“a razor shall never come on his head”) (v. 11).

- The Nazirites were a group of people who were specially dedicated to the Lord’s service by oath (see Numbers 6).

- One of the signs of a Nazirite was that he or she was not allowed to cut his hair (Numbers 6:5).

- The Nazirite vow normally was made for a set duration, but Hannah’s son would be set apart for his entire life.

iv. What kind of faith would it take to turn over to the Lord’s care the son one had waited so long for? 

B. While we may not turn over our toddlers to be raised at the temple, there comes a point where all parents have to entrust their children into God’s hands (1:9-18).

i. No matter how much we hover over our children, we cannot supervise them at all times for their entire life.

ii. Sooner or later, we will have to trust them to do the right thing even when we are not looking.

iii. At that point, all we can do is entrust them into God’s hands.

iv. Sadly, sometimes our children will choose to rebel against what we have tried to teach them.
a) At those times, it becomes even more important that we commit them to the Lord’s care.

b) [Illustration] Monica and Augustine

- Once there was a woman named Monica who had a very gifted and intelligent son.
- He left home to secure a prestigious position in the capital teaching public speaking to law students and future politicians.
- Although he had been raised in a Christian home, he abandoned his Christian heritage and developed a reputation for partying and chasing women.
- Monica heard rumors that her son had not only rejected Christianity, but had gotten wrapped up in some strange cult imported from the East.
- Monica continually sought her priest’s help in praying for her wayward son.
- Finally, probably to get her off his back, her priest told her to go her way because, “It cannot be that the son of these tears should be lost.”
- Later, after one of his close friends had suffered a near-death experience, Monica’s son began to reconsider the Christian faith he had been taught as a child.
- After studying the New Testament, he gave his heart to Christ and eventually became the most influential Christian theologian this side of the Apostle Paul.
- Today, some even call him “Saint” Augustine.

III. Godly mothers trust that God will provide (1:19-20).

---

4 Ibid., 69-70.
A. After laying her burden before the Lord and receiving encouragement from Eli the priest, Hannah returned home.

B. Her new countenance demonstrates that she was trusting in God to answer her prayer.

C. In due time, God granted her request and she gave birth to a son.

D. She gave her son the name “Samuel” (“God Heard”) to remind her that he was a gift from the Lord.\(^5\)

E. Sometimes God does not give us what we want, but what we need (1:19-20).

   i. God heard Hannah and gave her what she requested because it fit His plan to provide Israel with a king.

   ii. However, He just as easily could have called on her to keep trusting Him for her provision without giving her a son.

      a) [Illustration] Paul and his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:6-10)

         • Paul suffered some kind of physical debilitation that was interfering with his quality of life and ability to minister.

         • On at least three occasions Paul had begged the Lord for healing.

         • So far, God had refused: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”

         • God have Paul what he needed, not what he wanted.

      b) [Illustration] Garth Brooks and “Thank God for Unanswered Prayers” \(^6\)

\(^5\) Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, s.v. “Samuel.”
• Brooks sings about running into an old girlfriend from high school, the one he had thought at the time he wanted to spend his life with.

• “Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers Remember when you're talkin' to the man upstairs That just because he doesn't answer doesn't mean he don't care Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.”

F. Seek God in prayer, but trust that He will provide what we need even if it is not what we think we want.

IV. Godly mothers keep their promises (1:21-28).

A. Hannah kept her word, even though it cost her (1:21-28).

   i. When Samuel had been weaned, Hannah made good on her promise to turn him over to the priests to serve at the sanctuary.

   ii. Imagine the faith it took to turn over the son on whom she had waited so long to be raised by strangers!

      a) Consider that Hannah was entrusting her son’s care to Eli, who did not have a very good track record when it came to his own sons!

      b) Hannah had made a vow to the Lord, and she intended to keep it.

B. Our children need to see us as people of integrity.

   i. Our children need to observe us demonstrating honesty and integrity in everything we do, even when it costs us.

      a) [Illustration] Stuart Briscoe and the Bank

         • Stuart Briscoe tells of being hired by a bank. He was young, new, and just learning the business. One day his boss told him, "If Mr. Smith calls for me, tell him I'm out." Briscoe replied, "Oh, are you planning to go
"No, I just don't want to speak to him, so tell him I'm out." "Let me make sure I understand--Do you want me to lie for you?"
The boss blew up at him. He was outraged, angered. Stuart prayed and God gave him a flash of insight. "You should be happy, because if I won't lie for you, isn't it safe to assume that I won't lie to you?" 7

b) Integrity is as much “caught” as “taught”.

ii. Our children need to know that our word is good.

a) They need to know that when we say, “Don’t cross that line or there will be consequences”, we mean it!

b) They need to know that when we say “I love you”, we mean it!

V. Godly mothers remember where their true strength lies (2:1-11).

A. Hannah remembered that God is in control and every blessing comes ultimately from His hand (2:1-11).

B. Being a parent is a rewarding job, but one that can only be performed well with the Lord’s help.

CONCLUSION:

Someone once remarked “Becoming a mother is not so difficult. Being a mother is very much so.” Through the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God can help you be a good mother.

Abraham Lincoln is reported to have once said, “No man is poor who has had a godly mother.” Our kids need mothers, and fathers, who will take their concerns to God, prayer powerful prayers, lives lives of integrity and trust in God’s provision.

This morning I gave my wife a card which said, the greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. That is important, but I submit that there is a gift that is even greater. The greatest gift a parent can give a child is to demonstrate a love for God that spills out in a godly character. What kind of gift are you giving your children today?

---
7 Stuart Briscoe; article on-line; available at http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/i/integrity.htm; accessed 8 May 2011.

Copyright © Alan Rogers 2011