



Women of the Bible

Hannah

1 Samuel 1 & 2

Everybody has personality. There are other people who are just like you, and there are still others who are so different you will never understand them. Opposites attract, but you must have some major things in common to walk together, and that's where Grace comes in. Nobody can deny the difference that Christ makes.

In 1 Samuel 1:2, we find the words “*a certain man.*” God can do the work Himself or with angels; but when He is at work, He most always chooses a person. Elkanah was of mount Ephraim, a Levitical city. That will come into play in v. 11 with Hannah's vow. He has two wives. Polygamy was a fact of life in the ancient world; and it was always characterized by strife and conflict. See Matthew 19:8 and Malachi 2:15.

HANNAH'S PERSONALITY: (a perfect example of personality and the difference grace makes)

What do you imagine life was like for Hannah? 1:3-8

These days, we find many kids who make life difficult for others their age: you're ugly; your teeth are crooked; cheap Nikes :/

Hannah was provoked; and Peninnah did it “for to make her fret.” Intentional. Premeditated. Apart from grace, motives are ugly. Peninah, the one with bad character had children; Hannah, the one with good character had none. It seemed like a curse. **Often, we don't understand God's ways until He completes His plan.**

Miraculously, Hannah didn't respond verbally. Instead, she wept and didn't eat. When you're provoked, how do you respond? *Whatever Hannah's personality was, grace superseded it. What grace! What character!*

What was her condition at that moment?

She was in bitterness of soul, praying, weeping.

What was her decision?

She walked **toward** the place of worship (1:8-11)

How did she worship? With humility and promise and respect.

She acknowledged God's power (1:11) “*Lord of hosts*”

This title is used some 260 times in the Old Testament and has the idea “LORD of the Mighty Armies.”

Hannah felt attacked by her rival, so she called on the *LORD of Mighty Armies to be her protector.*

She humbled herself: “thine handmaid” 3x.

She made a promise (1:11). The Nazarite vow can be found in Numbers 6, but summed up:

- Abstinence from any product from a grape vine, signifying distance from all fleshly pleasures
- No mourning for the dead or coming near a dead body; offering special sacrifices if distance is unavoidable
- No razor upon the hair of the head; locks must grow
- Separated holy unto the Lord all the days of his life

The Nazarite had greater concerns than the ordinary joys and sorrows of life. Never cutting the hair was a public, visible sign to others of the vow. Typically, the vow of a Nazarite was taken for a period of time. Samuel and Samson (Judges 13:5) were unique because they were Nazarites from birth.

Hannah didn't respond disrespectfully when Eli called her out (1:12-17).

What was Hannah's response after she prayed (1:18-23)?

The Lord granted her request and she named him Samuel (*shmu'el* in Hebrew) ("name of God"). The time of a Levite's special dedication to the LORD only lasted from the age of 30 to 50 (Numbers 4:2-3). Hannah took what already belonged to the LORD and gave it back to Him, dedicated it to Him. We may be dedicated unto the LORD, but it is possible to give God a greater dedication.

We often want (make that daily want) things from God, but He also wants things from us. Hannah took her dedication a step further and promised Samuel to the LORD all the days of his life. IN return, we find, as Hannah did, that God often does "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

Hannah prayed until she received the assurance she desired. When she left the temple, she was a changed woman. Her heart was lighter, the burden had been lifted, and her appetite was back. Yes!

INSIGHT INTO HER PERSONALITY:

- She was sensitive to surroundings (1:6).
- She was opinionated but not openly vocal.
- She revered authority and held them in high regard (1:15)
- She felt that her life was unbearable or meaningless (1:10, 15)
- She found little satisfaction in possessions or provisions (1:8)
- She was prone to muddle and have a hard time enjoying life (1:7, 10)
- She was good at expressing herself creatively (see I Sam. 2)

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HANNAH:

- We should respond with grace, or not respond at all.
Hannah showed unmatched restraint with her words. She not only knew the right things to say but also when to say nothing. Keep in mind that Peninnah's torment had been going on for years; yet Hannah kept her mouth shut.
- We receive multiple blessings from the Lord when we reverence God-appointed authority in our life.
Remember that Eli spoke sharply to her (1:14). When she communicated with him, his heart softened toward her and he went to God on her behalf—maybe multiple times (2:20-21), or maybe continued blessings from the first prayer and blessing. No doubt they came to Eli year after year to worship and receive his blessing, and to see Samuel. When God's timing was perfect, He removed her affliction and blessed her more than she could ever have dreamed.

- We play a very important, distinct role in God's bigger plan. (2:10b)
God blessed Hannah with a son (what she so desperately begged God for); but God's bigger plan? Samuel was to become one of the greatest prophets of Israel. It was Samuel who anointed kings Saul and David, a step which reaches even further to the Son of David (Jesus Himself).

Having directed many school plays over the years, one of the challenges always was getting some students to play their part, whether big or small. Can't you imagine God in Heaven, who sees the big picture, must be looking down from Heaven many days, saying to each of us, "Play your part!" There's something bigger in the works than just our little place in God's great universe. It's a challenge to do things well, with eternity in mind.