

SURRENDER

Hannah's quick surrender, *1 Samuel 1:1-11*

All four gospels include repeated references to Jesus' teaching that people should lose their lives for his sake (cf. *Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-27; 14:25-27; 17:33; John 12:25*). Jesus did not possess a limited set of teachings that he refined by repeating to various audiences. Instead, knowing "what was in man"¹ (*John 2:23-25*) and having "all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom" (*Colossians 2:3*), Jesus offered the teachings his audiences needed to hear. His repeating emphasis on selfless surrender indicates he believed people needed to listen to that message because they struggled with it. Last week, we began a month-long series challenging us to surrender ourselves to God in the coming year. This lesson continues that theme by considering Hannah's quick surrender.

Hannah and Abraham

Last week, we examined Abraham's gradual surrender to God. Even though Abraham and Hannah's stories might initially seem very different, they overlap in several ways. Those intersections make Hannah a fitting second person in our surrender series. Consider some of the parallels:

- Both Abraham and Hannah's stories occur at crucial moments.
 - Abraham's story follows the downward spiral of sin in Genesis 3-11 and transitions to the introduction of God's promise (*Genesis 12:1-3*).
 - Hannah's story follows Israel's long, downward spiral in the book of Judges and transitions to the period of the kings.
- In both cases, God responded in unlikely ways - He chose barren couples.
- Both stories feature promised sons offered to God and redeemed by Him.
- However, significant differences separate Abraham and Hannah's stories.
 - Hannah voluntarily offered her son to God (*1 Samuel 1:11*), while God requested that Abraham sacrifice his son.
 - Hannah trusted God and waited for His action, while Abraham took matters into his own hands.

"I will give him to the LORD"²

Hannah's story opens with the short statement, "Hannah had no children" (*1 Samuel 1:2*). The simplicity of the statement belies the intensity of the emotions her barrenness created. *1 Samuel*

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

² *1 Samuel 1:11*. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



notes that “she was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly” (*1 Samuel 1:10*). A few factors contributed to her reaction.

- First, in the agrarian, patriarchal society in which Hannah lived, a woman’s value largely rested upon her ability to produce male children. Because of the importance of sons in the Ancient Near East, wives who could not have children were sometimes discarded, alienated, or given a lower status.
- Second, Hannah’s shame about her barrenness tied to her culture’s belief that the inability to have children occurred as divine punishment (*1 Samuel 1:5-6; cf. 2 Samuel 6:23; Psalm 127:3-4*).
- Third, Hannah’s husband Elkanah had a second wife, Peninnah, who had children (*1 Samuel 1:2*).

Peninnah’s fruitfulness should have privileged her with a better relationship with Elkanah, but he loved Hannah more despite her barrenness (*1 Samuel 1:4-5*). Peninnah responded to Hannah’s shameful inability to conceive and to Elkanah’s love for Hannah by tormenting her (*1 Samuel 1:6-7*). Her abuse of Hannah reveals another significant factor in Hannah’s story – “the Lord had closed her womb” (*1 Samuel 1:5-6*). While the text does not explain why God “closed her womb,” Hannah responded by entrusting her situation to God (*1 Samuel 1:9-18*). *1 Samuel* evidences her commitment to God by recording her promise that if God would give her a son, she would turn him over to the temple to “stay there forever” (*1 Samuel 1:11, 22*). Hannah’s humble surrender to God prompted Him to give her a son (*cf. 1 Samuel 1:20*).

God chose Hannah to be the mother of Samuel, the last of Israel’s judges, and the one who transitioned the nation to a monarchy. Despite the specialness of her God-given son, Hannah only kept him until she weaned him (most likely between the ages of two and three years), after which she brought him to Eli and “dedicated him to the Lord,” relinquishing her son to Eli’s care (*1 Samuel 1:24-28; cf. 1 Samuel 2:18-20*). Because of her faithfulness to her vow and her commitment to God (*cf. 1 Samuel 1:26-28*), God blessed Hannah with three more sons and two daughters (*1 Samuel 2:21*).

Hannah surrendered quickly and voluntarily to God because she yearned for release from her suffering.

Applications

- Surrender and hardship connect.
- Hardship connects to surrender because we do not resign our self-will until confronted with our inability and brokenness.
- Surrendering takes time, but the length differs from person to person.
- Surrender’s purpose centers on God’s will rather than our good.
- However, God blesses those who surrender to Him.

