

Old Testament Characters (Bible Study 2)
Hannah: Praying in Pain
August 23, 2009

How do you react when you are suffering? This week we study the story of Hannah who was unable to bear children. Elkanah was the husband of both Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah was Elkanah's first wife, but with Peninnah he had many children. Each year, Elkanah would make his way up to the house of the Lord to worship and sacrifice. He would give meat to Peninnah and his sons, but give double portions to Hannah. Since Peninnah had multiple children with Elkanah, she would provoke Hannah each year to the point where Hannah broke into tears. This provoking took such a toll on Hannah that she would lose her appetite.

In those days it was uncommon for a woman to go to the church by herself to pray alone, but Hannah was so desperate to have a child that she went to pray anyways. Hannah was at a bargaining point and willing to do anything in order for the Lord to give her a child. As she was praying, Eli the priest was sitting outside of the Lord's temple. Her prayer was coming from her heart and only her lips were moving; there was no voice. Eli, observing the silent movement of her mouth, accused her of drinking! She explained to him that she wasn't drunk and that she was pouring out her soul to the Lord. Eli said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

The Lord remembered Hannah as she lay next to her husband one day and over the course of time, Hannah gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel. Overjoyed by his birth, Hannah consecrated her son to the Lord. It was before his birth that she vowed to give her child to the Lord, but ultimately Samuel was a sacrifice to the Lord; he is what she cherished the most. After Samuel had been weaned, he was taken to Eli where he was given to the Lord.

Hannah loved Samuel with all of her heart and he would become the great prophet. No matter the problems that we are facing today, Hannah's experience is a great example of how we can be encouraged to persevere in prayer.