

1 Samuel Series Slide

For the next several weeks heading into the summer- we're going to through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel.

Here's why I think the LORD wants us in 1 Samuel during this time.

We're focusing this year on Spiritual Renewal...for our church...and the Spiritual Revival we hope God will bring through us to our city.

That's not a one time flashy event- filled with OOOs and AHHHs- at least it won't stop there. When the Lord renews us- changes us- it sets a new normal. A new baseline for the way we live life together.

The book of 1 Samuel is the establishing of a new normal- a spiritual renewal for the people of Israel. They had just come through a chaotic time of some really violent and bad leadership in the book of Judges- and in so doing- they became a chaotic and individualistic, consumeristic culture. Everyone looking out for themselves.

Judges 21:25

25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him.

In other words- for the people of Israel- there was no leadership. There was no spiritual authority. Its not that God had left them- its that his authority- his guidance- his word to them was ignored. So everyone made up their own meaning, their own morality...and they become their own god.

But God would not abandon them. He was sending hope. A new leader. A prophet and a priest- Samuel- who would usher in a King- David.. And eventually- he was preparing them to receive a better King- the eternally anointed King- Jesus himself.

This last line of Judges is a pretty accurate description for our culture, our country, and many of us in this room right now.

I want you to know- that the big picture stuff that God does- in Israel- and in our church- always starts in smaller, personal renewal in each of us.

So-maybe you're thinking today that some ancient book about far away religious kingdoms have nothing to do with your life.

I'm telling you, you are looking at it backwards. Instead of looking at your life as the big picture and the story of humanity that the Bible tells as the small book of life hacks and advice that can help make your life better...switch it.

Title Slide- “Hannah’s Tears: How God Moves us From Quick-Fixes to Sustaining Prayers” - 1 Samuel 1-2

Shift the narrative. Start looking at your life as something smaller. As a part of the big story that God is telling. That he is writing. After all- isn't a book written by ONE author better than a book written by 7 billion authors?

Instead of figuring out if God plays a part in your story- start to ask the question- Do I play a part in his?

I promise you- your entire life will fundamentally change. Spiritual Renewal will begin- and you will never ever be the same.

...and in the theme of our ongoing “Sex Gender and Spiritual Renewal Series”... Spiritual Renewal starts yet again- with a miraculous pregnancy.

1 Samuel 1:2, 4-20

2 [Elkanah] had two wives, the first named Hannah and the second Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless.

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 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 Year after year, when she went up to the Lord’s house, her rival taunted her in this way. Hannah would weep and would not eat. 8 “Hannah, why are you crying? ” her husband, Elkanah, would ask. “Why won’t you eat? Why are you troubled? Am I not better to you than ten sons? ”

9 On one occasion, Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord’s temple. 10 Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept with many tears. 11 Making a vow, she pleaded, “Lord of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant’s affliction, remember and not forget me, and give your servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut.”

12 While she continued praying in the Lord’s presence, Eli watched her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to 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 request you've made of him."

18 "May your servant find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

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

1 Samuel 2:1-2, 5-10

Hannah prayed:

My heart rejoices in the Lord;
my horn is lifted up by the Lord.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.

2 There is no one holy like the Lord.
There is no one besides you!

And there is no rock like our God.

5 Those who are full hire themselves out for food,
but those who are starving hunger no more.
The woman who is childless gives birth to seven,
but the woman with many sons pines away.

6 The Lord brings death and gives life;
he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up.

7 The Lord brings poverty and gives wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.

8 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the trash heap.

He seats them with noblemen
and gives them a throne of honor.

For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's;
he has set the world on them.

9 He guards the steps of his faithful ones,
but the wicked perish in darkness,
for a person does not prevail by his own strength.

10 Those who oppose the Lord will be shattered;
he will thunder in the heavens against them.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.
He will give power to his king;

he will lift up the horn of his anointed.

Transition: What Hannah does here is absolutely foundational to Spiritual Renewal in any individual's life- and God uses it mightily in his big picture for working out the salvation of his people. This pattern remains for us today. Let's take a look at it- and ask God to do it in us.

1) Emotions are smoke from a fire. Don't fan the smoke- follow it to see what kind of fire is burning in you.

My wife and I will sit down together on the rare evenings where we aren't praying and reciting our favorite Bible passages to one another...and we'll watch a "Show" on "TV" or a "movie" on a "streaming service".

And that's when some of our emotional differences come out. I am a crier. I love crying. I would season my food with the saline of my precious tears...so when an emotional crescendo is happening in a movie or show- I let the tears run down my face and to drip onto my shirt, or hit the corners of my mouth. I feel alive. I feel the presence of God and the reality of the humans he made us to be when I connect emotionally to a story.

But Keva will fan her face with her hands and say "Shew". She is trying to dry her tears and return to baseline emotion.

...and I'm not saying she's wrong.

But there is a way that some of us have learned that our emotions are unhelpful. They are like unnecessary speed bumps that slow us down.

Don't forget what we talked about on Easter. Jesus wept. He was deeply moved about his friend's death. He was troubled. Angry. AND through those tears he SHOWED his love for his Heavenly Father and also for his friends. He didn't hide his tears or hide from his tears. His tears proclaimed the glory of God because what he wept for- is what his Father wept for. There was no fanning his face or wiping them away quickly.

BUT... that doesn't mean our tears always lead us to truth. In fact- our tears, our emotions are usually going to reveal what story is shaping us the most. And everybody is telling us a story about who we are, why we're here, and what is the vision of the Good Life we should be striving for.

That makes our emotions real gifts. Powerful tools that can show us what's under the surface...trying to come out. Is it glorious... or something insidious?

Let's look at Hannah and her tears in this passage.

Because the entire big story of Israel...and the coming Messiah...and eventually the salvation of the human race...all comes down to what Hannah does with her tears.

First, let's talk about why Hannah is crying.

1:2

OK, Elkanah had 2 wives. This is problematic.

And it's a function of the story their culture was telling them...it's not God's endorsement of polygamy.

Anytime the Scripture brings up polygamy, it's painted in a negative light. It's descriptive of the culture of the time, not as prescriptive...as in God saying "do this".

And here again...it brings up issues.

One of the purposes of polygamy is because ancient cultures actually over-valued having kids. In fact, they were highly dependent on the fertility of women. Of course, with multiple wives-offspring would increase which meant an increase in the number of workers you had in your field or shop...or whatever the family business was.

Additionally, the more kids you had, the bigger military you had on a national level and personally you had a retirement plan. So more kids equals a more comfortable and secure future. And better financial situation now.

Not to mention the importance in this culture of carrying on a name for a clan.

So with this story playing in the background of their culture... women took their deepest value from their ability to produce children.

It was the way to be a venerated cultural hero- the more kids you birthed, especially male children, the more honored and valued you were.

To be a barren woman, was to be a hopeless woman. You weren't offering any hope for the future for yourself, your family, or your nation.

1:5

Now Hannah is in this category. Which on one hand- gets her double portion of meat when they go to the temple for a sacrifice. Because Elkanah loves her, and doesn't want her to feel bad- He is trying to show her that his love isn't dependent on her producing children. So he becomes an Arby's- He has the meats. And she gets the double patty burger. with a side of roast beef.

1:6

This, in turn, increases Elkanah's other wife's superiority complex and jealousy. So she mercilessly taunts and bullies Hannah.

In fact, the word here for severely taunt is the Hebrew word "raam". It literally means to roar or thunder. It's like a hurricane. Can you imagine your internal emotional state when your culture is saying "you aren't valuable"- and your "sister wife" is reinforcing it over and over.

There is no amount of double beef & cheddar sandwiches that are going to fill the roaring void left by her culture and her bullying rival.

1:8

Then there is the pressure from her husband. Though he means well, He's in her face saying "Why are you upset? You shouldn't be so upset? Isn't my love enough for you?"

So think of what Hannah is hearing inside of her right now.

She has this cultural story of her worth being reinforced by Penninah- "You're worthless because you can't have a baby." And then she has her husband that she feels she's letting down- "He thinks this is about him."

But watch what she does next.

1:9-10

Hannah got up and went to the temple to pray.

Two Hebrew words here that show us she is doing more than just getting up from the table.

The first is the word translated "get up". It means more than just push your chair back from the table and stand. Its a very strong verb. Its more like, determined...with her choice made and eyes fixed on what she was going to do.

Its sort of defiant. She has these two messages from her culture and her husband. "You're worthless"...and "Don't you love me?"- and its like she shuts out these voices when she stands up...

and thats where our second word comes in.

The phrase deeply distressed and weeping bitterly. These are phrases from the Hebrew Bible that when they occur, are never settled or comforted by a human. In the Hebrew bible when someone is Marah or bitter- its only ever resolved by YHWH.

So of course- thats where Hannah turns. She shuts out the voices telling her what her salvation is "Just have a baby and you'll be rescued." "Just let your husbands love be enough for you and you'll be rescued".

She says "STOP." and then she turns to the Lord in her pain.

Back to 1)

Listen, every culture in the history of the world has come to people with oppressive messages of what makes you worth something.

For Hannah- she had to achieve by having kids.

And every culture has bullies like Peninnah that rub it in your face when you fail that standard... and well meaning people like Elkanah that try to help but just make it worse.

You're nothing unless you're famous.
Or financially independent.
Or make it into med school.
Or marry a beautiful person.

And you tend to hate yourself if you don't accomplish those goals.

And listen, this is what those cultural stories do to you. If you achieve- you become like Peninnah. A bully. A taunter. That looks down on those who haven't.

And if don't- you weep. A hurricane of emotion builds up inside you- because everyday you have to look yourself in the mirror and you see a failure...according to the story you're being told.

That's why it's so important to do what Hannah did here.

She arises and she goes to God to sort out her feelings.

She stops the stories and she goes to God to get a better picture of who she is and why she is so upset.

See, our emotions are like smoke to a fire. And often, we just want to fan away the smoke, instead of following it to see WHY we're angry, or upset, or tearful, or happy, or frustrated, or bitter.

And when you don't address a fire, when you just fan smoke...eventually your house burns down.

But here's the thing. When you follow those emotions down to a heart level- to really confront where they are coming from- you can find some insidious things...like lying messages you are believing from your culture...but you can also find beautiful things. You can find a fire that God has kindled in you. A calling. A way he has created you to care about something.

And you are going to need his help to figure that out.

So the question is how?

Well, we taught a tool here a few years ago to help with that. So let me just bring it up here quickly. We call it Iceberg journaling.

Iceberg Journaling

What happened?

What did I feel?

What story did I tell myself?

What story does the gospel tell me?

What counterintuitive action is required?

We called it Iceberg journaling. SO instead of Iceberg lettuce, you can say to God "Let us Iceberg"

To shift the metaphor- an iceberg only presents a part of itself above the surface. Those are your emotions...or your emotive reactions in a given situation.

But the next day- if you'll take the time to think back over the situation- Go to God in prayer and listen to him as you think... you can ask these 5 questions and write down your answers to understand what fire is burning in you.

The point is- you can start identifying the stories you are just absorbing from your surrounding culture- and reframe them to the bigger picture of what God says about you...and what he's doing in the world.

Transition: which is what happens next for Hannah. When you go to God to sort through your emotions...it allows you to...

2) **Let go of short-sighted quick-fixes, and trust the God of the big picture.**

Remember that last line of Judges- that comes just before this story in 1 Samuel.

There was no King, no authority in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Hannah does the opposite. She easily could have not dug into her emotions, and just let them dictate her response. She could have reacted to Peninnah, "You culturally inappropriate word for a mean person. I hate you."

She could have given in to just pleasing her husband. "You're right. Your love is enough for me. Lets go home and have a nice evening."

But both of those are band-aids. They are quick fixes. They give into the short term need to relieve the emotion. To get out of the bitterness.

And this is exactly how you avoid God- your authority- and do what feels right in the moment- what is right in your own eyes.

Instead, moves out of the small story, where she is the star of her own movie...and she goes to the author...the director...and re-orient who she is and what she should do by his script...instead of her own.

v 11

She prays that God will remember her, give her a son, and she makes a vow. Now, at first, it sort of looks like she's bargaining with God.

Quid pro quo. "God- you give me a son, and I'll make sure he grows up to be a priest." The promise to not cut his hair is a part of the Nazarite vow. Which is basically the entrance into the priesthood for people who were not born into the tribe of Levi. or the Levites.

But this is not bargaining. There's no quid pro quo. Let me show you how you know.

v 17- 18

If this was a bargain...the pattern would be Prayer then pregnancy then peace.

But it's not. The peace comes for Hannah not BECAUSE she gets pregnant, but BECAUSE she shifted her hope...from the cultural pressure and hope of getting pregnant as salvation- to the big picture of how she fits in God's bigger story of what he's doing in the world.

In fact, what she has done in prayer is get rid of this need of a child as her salvation.

Think of it. She has promised to dedicate this child to the temple. Meaning he won't be with her. He won't be with her in the market place when she's walking about. She won't have the proof to others that she needs to be held in honor in her society.

She can't post pics of this kid on her Instagram saying how proud she is of him. She can't use him as value projection. There won't be any bumper stickers about how he's an honor roll student at Hebrew school.

He will be invisible to society.

And according to the Nazarite vow- he won't be an heir. He won't carry on her husband's name...and he won't be an insurance policy for her to care for her in her old age.

She won't be able to squeeze love out of him or anyone else through his birth.

And yet...even though she is going to still lose all the ways that her society says this child can save her from her bitterness...she is at peace.

Because she has dedicated her way to the Lord. She looks not to the quick fix for emotional state or low role in society...instead she looks to the plan of the Lord. She looks not to what is seen...but what is unseen.

Instead of doing what is right in her own eyes in the short term...she sees the long haul with God...and does what is right in his eyes.

v 15-17

In her anguish. In the depth of her pain...she let it drive her to the LORD. And in spending time in prayer, she saw the long haul...the big picture...she became smaller...not talking about what she deserved or was owed, but instead- dedicating what used to be her salvation to GOD...and in turn receiving the peace that passes understanding.

v 19-20

I want you to note. That it wasn't her husband's love...or having children per se that was the wrong thing. In fact- you see that God used BOTH of those things in his big picture. Through their love- (Sex Gender and Spiritual Renewal- HELLO)- they produced a child.

The difference is that these things stopped being ultimate to Hannah. They were means to God's ends...not her own way of individual achievement or worth. She looked past her husband...and past her son...to find peace with God.

She rests her hope finally in her God.

Transition: And from that- she sings about it. She proclaims it. And in that way herself- becomes the mouthpiece of God.

3) Let prayer sustain you and proclaim God's salvation.

Hannah nurses her baby, Samuel, and then takes him to the temple to fulfill her vow to the Lord.

v 27-28

I've read this story many, many times.

And even when I was a kid and heard it, I thought about how hard this moment must have been for Hannah.

She finally has a baby, and now- she has to let him walk away. Into the temple. And it's not even really a great situation at the temple-which we'll hear more about next week... but Eli's sons are wilin' out...so it's not exactly a safe environment...and that's pretty well known at the time.

And yet...Hannah trusts God over everything.

In an act of worship- she makes good on her promise.

Parents- If you cried on the first day of kindergarten with your kid- imagine watching little 2 year old Samuel holding Eli's hand as they walk into the temple- and knowing you'll barely ever see him again.

The poise. The peace. The resolve. The strength it took to do that is supernatural.

Back to 3)

And in chapter 2 we get this prayer.

Written down- which is another plug for journaling. If Hannah doesn't journal- we don't have this prayer.

And in writing it down- she is both helping to sustain herself- remind her of God's big picture...and it helps others- it proclaims what God is doing to generations to come.

2:1

First, notice she starts with rejoicing in the Lord's salvation. She is able to recognize that Samuel was never her salvation. That God always is.

She recalls how he has delivered her from the taunts of Peninnah. Not by saying "See- I got pregnant after all...I'm worth something."

Rather by proclaiming the faithfulness of God in bringing her peace.

2:2

She says there is no ROCK like our God.

Cultures, societies, spouses, children...they will waver. One minute they will demand one thing in order to be loved...and then suddenly they will ask for something more.

But God is steady. He loves first. He doesn't change.

Idols are always moving the goal post for how to find peace.

The Lord says, Just trust me. Trust my big picture. Trust the words I've said to you.

And in her song- she reveals the way the Lord saves. Which is what sustains her as she misses her boy...and it proclaims to us what God has done through his own boy... Jesus.

2:10

Notice she says here "God will bring justice" and she says he will "Thunder" against his enemies.

Remember who "thundered" against Hannah. Peninnah.

She is at peace in God's plan because she knows all the wrong ever done to her will be undone. Those that thundered against her...she doesn't have to react to or set the record straight in the moment or run back and rub her enemies nose in it. She is trusting in God to THUNDER for her.

And she says "He God will give power to his king. His anointed." That word anointed is the word Messiah.

The whole prayer ends up with Jesus. Israel had no king, no authority- but God was bringing one. the Messiah.

And through Samuel- God will anoint David. But David ultimately will fail. Yet the scripture points us to a better David. One in the line of David born into the house of David. Jesus. Who is the king that doesn't fail Israel, even though Israel turns their back on him.

In fact, with Jesus on the cross, all of God's judgment is "thundered" down on him, so that we don't receive it. Because let's be honest. All of us have put our hope in quick fixes. All of us have been Peninah- that achieve and then look down on others who aren't like us. We were God's enemies, living not for him, but doing what was right in our own eyes.

But God, became flesh.

And another young woman, Mary, had an impossible conception...and let her little boy go to offer himself as a sacrifice.

She prayed a similar prayer to Hannah.

2:5 & Luke 1:52-53

Both Hannah and Mary- show us God's pattern of salvation. Those who seek to fill themselves up and save themselves with temporary pleasures of food, and sex, and money, high position- end up humbled and lacking peace.

But those who turn to the Lord- in the middle of their pain and bitterness...will be exalted, lifted up, saved.

See- Hannah was saying- "I don't want this child for me. I want him for you, God" I have decided at my most desperate and bitter point that your love is enough. I don't care what the society or culture thinks I need..If I know you love me and are pleased with me- then I don't need any other voice. You will fill the void."

Back to 3)

But if Hannah hadn't let her suffering and the bitter emotions drive her to engage God with it. If she just would have kept striving to have kids or complacently gave in to Elkanah's request to let HIS love be enough...she would have missed it. And she would have remained empty and bitter.

And she would not have participated in God's bigger story. Because she never could have dedicated Samuel- she would never have had the strength to let him go...she would have clung to him to squeeze every bit of love and societal honor from his

existence- in turn- she would have absolutely broken him. And then Samuel wouldn't have anointed David...and all the way down- people would have missed Jesus himself.

But her prayer sustained her. And it proclaims salvation to us. Jesus christ. The Anointed one. The Messiah. The one who took God's thundering against sin, forgave his enemies...and removed from us our guilt and shame...so we could finally know the love of God.

Do you want to be like Hannah? You have to look to the one to which Hannah is proclaiming in her prayer.

Its time to get up. To arise. To cut out the voices of your culture or your family that are offering you quick fixes...and to say yes to trusting Jesus as the King of not only your life— but the author of the big story he wants you to play a role in.

Pray.