



1 Samuel 1:1-26

Watch the [history of Mother's Day](#).

Mom's, do you have any idea how much money Americans will spend on you this year? It is estimated that we will buy flowers, dinners and gifts totaling in excess of \$21 billion!¹ Moms, if money spent is any indication of our love for you, then we must really love you!

Father's Day became a National holiday in 1972 thanks to president Nixon. By comparison, Americans will spend a mere \$13 billion on dads.

I will not decry the commercialization of Mother's Day, nor will I encourage you to spend lots of money. However, if a gift or a meal out helps to honor your mother, then by all means, honor your mother! Moms, you can tell your children, "Hey, where's my slice of that \$21 billion?" ;-)

It is day set aside to honor and remember your mothers, to honor your mothers and perhaps for some of you, to forgive your mothers for their failings. No matter how much money we spend on you or how much we honor you, you are not a perfect mother and neither was your own mother. It is in this spirit that we learn about one mother named Hannah, who lived 3000 years ago. We believe that since the Biblical authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit when they wrote and that the same Holy Spirit can apply these truths to our lives, that even a 3000 year-old story can have great significance for us today.

1. She was not jealous or contentious.

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. 2 He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD.

4 On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. 6 And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. 7 So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. 8 And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

We are told that she was distressed by the constant abuse she received from her rival, the second wife of her husband, but there is no evidence that she was ever jealous of her. She desperately wanted a son and could have easily lashed out in anger at the other woman, but did not. Compare this to the way that two other women of the Bible dealt with similar circumstances. Sarah was not able to have a child with Abraham so she gave her maidservant Hagar to him so they could have a son. Remember, this was Sarah's idea. She proposed the idea to Abraham. Then when Hagar became pregnant, Sarah said this to Abraham, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering!" Sarah was so jealous and mean to Hagar that she ran away into the desert. She was all alone in the desert and pregnant, but she would have rather faced those odds than to continue to live under the abuse that Sarah dished out. Later when Sarah's son Isaac was born, she was so angry that she said this to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son." Sarah demonstrated a great deal of jealousy and contentiousness to what she perceived was her competition.

The wife of Sarah's grandson, Jacob did the exact same thing. If you remember, Jacob married both Rachel and her sister Leah. Just like Peninnah in 1 Samuel, Leah the older sister, began to bear sons to Jacob. Rachel was so insanely jealous and angry that she said this to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" Do you remember what happened next? Rachel's solution to her infertility was exactly like Sarah's. Rachel gave her servant to Jacob to bear sons through her. But unlike Sarah, Rachel—at least as far as we are told—did not become jealous of her servant. Instead, she turned it into a contest.

Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan. Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali (Genesis 30:6-8).

The battle was on. Back and forth they went. Leah copied Rachel's tactic and gave her servant to Jacob also. Back and forth they went, each battling for ultimate supremacy in Jacob's household; each placing their self-worth entirely on their wombs. They kept a running score but unfortunately, Rachel lost the baby race by a final score of 8-4.

<p>Rachel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph • Benjamin <p>Bilhah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan • Naphtali <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p>Leah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuben • Simeon • Levi • Judah • Issachar • Zebulun <p>Zilpah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gad • Asher <p style="text-align: center;">8</p>	<p>I know that men can be very competitive with one another, but I am told that women are also be competitive and jealous of one another. Ladies, is this true? Have you ever gotten jealous of another woman? Women compete differently than men. Like Sarah, Rachel and Leah, women tend to compete in the arena of the home. Woman compare how well behaved their children are to other children. They compare the way their homes are decorated. They compare their appearance. It's hard not to look over the neighbor's fence and see what they are doing with their lives. When the finances are tight, it is difficult to see others doing things or providing certain things for their children that we cannot</p>
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provide for our own. Mom's often keep score. You may not be in a battle with someone like Leah or Rachel but any mom can keep score with other moms. Keeping score is a form of jealousy.

Having said that, I am fully aware that even jealousy over one's children also has a great deal of love and nurturing mixed in. Love is the foundation, in a way, even for jealousy, but it's a severe imbalance and a constant temptation for moms.

We don't see any evidence of jealousy or contention in Hannah's character, even though she was mercilessly assaulted by Penninah. Hannah is surely a model for 21st century mothers—and fathers—to follow. One reason for her ability to endure was no doubt related to the second principle.

2. She trusted the perfect justice of God.

Jumping ahead to the rest of the story, we learn that Hannah does eventually have a son. In chapter two we have a record of her song of praise to the Lord for answering her prayers for a son. But take a look at v.3

*Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.*

That verse is most likely referring to her rival Penninah. Even though Hannah would not return the abuse to Penninah or even complain to her husband, she knew full well that God saw it all and would dispense the right amount of justice. She trusted the perfect justice of God.

Moms, do you think this would work with your children? When they disobey just say to yourself, that's OK, God will eventually punish them for their wrong. Obviously this would be ludicrous. God has entrusted parents with the responsibility of disciplining our children in order to train them in Godly wisdom and character. But when it comes to another adult who is abusing you or someone who, like Hannah dealt with, is provoking you into anger or tears, you have to trust that God will deal justly with them.

I am not saying that relationship problems should be ignored. As a matter of fact, ignoring problems is too often our default setting. We need to be able to approach those with whom we are in conflict with grace and truth. But many situations, especially if we have tried to communicate with them and they will just not have it, require us to back off and let God handle them. What if you and I were in charge of dispensing justice in such cases? We would either be too easy on the person, or in most cases I think, we would be too hard on them. If another person is provoking you, trust the perfect justice of God.

3. She prayed according to the sovereignty of God.

9 After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. 10 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. 11 And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. 14 And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." 15 But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." 17 Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." 18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

She wanted a child, specifically she wanted a son. In that culture you would be disgraced if you could not bring a baby boy into the world. Remember that struggle and competition between Rachel and her sister Leah to have children by Jacob? When Rachel's maidservant bore Jacob a son, Rachel named him Dan, which means "God has vindicated me". The next son born she named Naphtali which means "my struggle". Imagine naming your children such names as *vindicate* and *struggle* in order to be in competition with your sister or another mother. Rachel wanted a son in large part to take away her personal shame. She did it because her personal worth was intimately tied to her ability to bear sons. Hannah wanted a son, but we don't see any evidence of her having a similar struggle to that of Rachel or Sarah. She seemed to want a son because of the natural, God-given instinct for women to want children.

She prayed fervently for her desire to come true, but at the same time she was not demanding of God. When she prayed, she prayed according to the sovereignty of God. She had no guarantee that she would have a son. How many other Hannah's were there in Israel in her day? How many other righteous women were there who also desperately wanted a son? She asked God for a son, but did not demand that he answer her prayer. She prayed like I suggested a few weeks ago. Ask, beg and plead. Ask again and again, but do not demand. There are many streams within Christianity where demanding is the norm. Word of Faith and prosperity churches demand from God. They assume that if they speak the right words or give enough money that God will, God must listen to them. When you peel away the Christian shell this is nothing but paganism and witchcraft.

After finally finishing the book of Jeremiah this week I decided to read the book of Lamentations next. Listen for the great hope in the midst of suffering and disappointment.

1 I am the man who has seen affliction
under the rod of his wrath;
2 he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;
3 surely against me he turns his hand
again and again the whole day long.
4 He has made my flesh and my skin waste away;
he has broken my bones;
7 He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;
he has made my chains heavy;
8 though I call and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer;

21 But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
24 “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”
25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul who seeks him.
26 It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.

A fellow pastor in Wisconsin told me the story of a woman in his congregation who struggled with infertility. Obviously this can be an incredibly difficult time in the life of any woman. Unfortunately, this particular woman had already become extremely angry and bitter over her personal trial. Whenever this pastor was preaching and the topic of children came up, this woman, who always sat in the front row, would violently shake her head “NO” the entire time he was preaching. As he described it, her blonde head would wag back and forth for everyone to see as he tried to concentrate on the rest of the message.

If you know someone who has struggled with infertility, and Mother’s Day tends to bring this painful topic to the surface, tell her about Hannah. Not just that Hannah’s prayer was finally answered, but the way in which she prayed, trusting God—whatever the outcome. Also moms, you need to remember that your self-worth is not defined by your wombs.

4. She dedicated her children to the Lord.

19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20 And in

due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."

21 The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever." 23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. 24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Hannah is probably best known for the dedication of her son Samuel. She fulfilled her promise to dedicate him to the Lord. Now this is not the kind of baby dedication often practiced in churches, where the parents bring the child to the front of the church and promise to raise them in a Christian home. That is an important symbol that can be meaningful, but there is no comparison to what Hannah did. Remember her promise from v.11, If you give me a son I will give him back to the Lord. She did not have a guarantee that she would have more children. Samuel was all she had in the world, but she dedicated him—gave him to the Lord.

In what ways do we dedicate our children to the Lord? Again, the traditional baby dedication is more of a statement of dedication from the parents. "We dedicate ourselves to raising this child..." But do we mean by that? Do we mean that we trust God to do whatever he wishes with our child? Is it OK if God takes him/her away to a foreign missionary field? Is it OK if God allows pain and sorrow in his/her life? Hannah's commitment to her son and to the Lord was to wean him and release him. Our commitment is perhaps a little longer. Instead of 2-3 years, we have 18 years with our kids and then we release them. What's the fishing term—catch and release? If you plan to fish that way, your intention is not to keep the fish, only to catch them and immediately let them go. This should be our parenting style—raise and release. Raise them and then release them into the hand of God.

But do you trust God to take care of your children? Some adult children have strayed from the Lord. The mother of St. Augustine prayed for decades for her son to become a Christian. She spoke with one priest who said to her: "Go thy way, go thy way, and God help thee; it is not possible that the child of these tears should perish." Dedicating our children, no matter their age, means to completely release them into God's hand. For mothers this is the most difficult thing to do.

5. Her parental legacy was not perfect.

Hannah was not jealous or contentious, trusted in God's justice and sovereignty and dedicated her children completely to the Lord. Was she the perfect mother that none will ever attain to? There is, of course, no such thing as a perfect mother and it is helpful to know that her parental

legacy was not perfect. We know nothing about how her other five children turned out, although Samuel grew into a godly man himself. However, Samuel's two sons, Hannah's grandsons, were nothing like Samuel. They grew into greedy, power hungry and rebellious men. We honor our mothers, not because they are perfect, but because they offer love and sacrifice.

Some of you are familiar with the name Elisa Morgan. She was the president of MOPS—Mothers of Preschoolers, for twenty years. This is part of her story.

I'm probably the least likely person to head up a mothering organization. I grew up in a broken home. My parents were divorced when I was five. My older sister, younger brother and I were raised by my alcoholic mother. While my mother meant well, most of my memories are of my mothering her rather than her mothering me. Alcohol altered her love, turning it into something that wasn't love. When I was asked to consider leading MOPS International, a vital ministry that nurtures mothers, I went straight to my knees—and then straight to a therapist's office. How could God use me—who had never been mothered—to nurture other mothers? The answer came as I gazed into the eyes of other moms around me and saw their needs mirroring my own. God seemed to take my deficits and make them my offering—"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"²

No mother is perfect but all moms can rest in the all-sufficient grace of Jesus Christ.

Rich Maurer
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¹ <https://nrf.com/media/press-releases/families-spending-more-ever-mom-according-nrf-survey>

² *Christian Parenting Today*, May/June 1999