

**Message #2****I Samuel 1:1-8**

This book of I Samuel is a dynamic book of the Bible filled with dynamic stories. Now you would expect a great book like I Samuel to open with a great beginning and introduction. But that is not how the book opens. **The book opens with a story of a woman in total depression.** It would appear that she had been in this depression for years. She would go to the worship services year after year and just cry. She was so depressed at times that she wouldn't eat. That was all about to change.

Even in her state of depression she stayed faithful to God and she continued to pray and it is about to pay off. It took some years, but it is about to pay off. She would not only get out of her depression, but she would become the mother of Samuel. That is how the book opens. What we certainly see from this opening is this:

**NO MATTER HOW DEPRESSING YOUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, IF YOU WILL PURPOSE TO STAY FAITHFUL TO GOD AND PURPOSE TO CONTINUE TO WORSHIP AND PRAY, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY EXPERIENCE THE GREAT JOYFUL BLESSINGS OF GOD.**

In these opening verses, there are two central persons about whom God gives us information:

**PERSON #1** – I Samuel begins by introducing us to Elkanah, Samuel's father. **1:1-5**

In the first five verses of the book we learn seven facts about Samuel's father:

**Fact #1** - Samuel's father is identified as "a certain man." **1:1a**

The conjunction "now" that begins the verse connects us to the Judges narrative. Judges ends with "everyone doing that which is right in his own eyes." **Samuel begins the narrative by describing a "certain man" who was not doing what was right in his own eyes.**

By identifying him as a "certain" man, we know two things:

- 1) He was a certain man who was different from other men - governed by the Word of God.
- 2) He was a certain man specifically selected by God - God chose him for a godly purpose.

It is possible to live in a godless world and still be a faithful, godly man. Samuel's father was that kind of man.

**Fact #2** - Samuel's father lived in a specific city. **1:1b**

Samuel's father lived in "Ramathaim-zophim." The word means "two heights" or "two hills." This city is sometimes called Ramath or Ramah (1:19) and it is a key city to this book because this will be the place of Samuel's birth (1:19-20); Samuel's residence (7:17) and Samuel's burial place (25:1).

The fact that it was in “Zophim” tells us that this was a city located in Zuph’s or Zoph’s territory which was the hill country of Ephraim. It is uncertain just where this city was located. Some suggest it was located about five miles north of Jerusalem; some say nine miles north of Jerusalem.

Ephraim settled in this land in Joshua’s day (Josh. 17:15). It was good land with forests, fertile valleys, lots of water and springs. The Septuagint reveals that Ramatha was the place known in N.T. times as Arimathea.

**Fact #3** - Samuel’s father had a specific name and pedigree. **1:1c**

The name of Samuel’s father is Elkanah. What we immediately notice is quite an extensive pedigree is given to him. Elkanah was the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He is traced back four generations.

John Woodhouse said the importance of this pedigree is its unimportance. “From the point of view of social standing, fame, or power within the nation, Elkanah and his family were “nobodies.” This is the first hint...that the solution to Israel’s leadership crisis will not be found in the expected places” (*I SAMUEL Looking For a Leader*, p. 21).

**It appears that the reason for this detail is to establish that Samuel comes from the tribe of Levi.** Levi had three sons - Gershom, Kohath and Merari (I Chron. 6:16). Kohath, Levi’s second son, produced the line that eventually produced Zuph, Tohu, Elihu, Jeroham and Elkanah (I Chron. 6:34-38).

Samuel’s father was in a lineage of Levitical ministers, specifically who were very skilled at music. In fact, David will put them in charge of music worship (I Chron. 6:32-34).

Think for a moment what things would be like for Hannah. You travel with this Levitical family every year. These people are very skilled at singing the praises of God. They are talented and happy and honored and you are a woman who feels out of place, like a loser. Truth is, it will be Hannah who will be blessed the most.

**Fact #4** - Samuel’s father had two wives. **1:2**

Samuel’s father was not a perfect man; no father is. We learn that he had two wives, which was never the original intent of God. God originally made one man and one woman and when He told the man to “cleave to his wife,” He did not say cleave unto your “wives” plural (Gen. 2:24).

Polygamy was not the original intent of God, but it was tolerated by God during the early days of development under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 21:15-17). Actually it was N.T. Christianity that redeveloped the Biblical concept of marriage in that a man was to be a “one woman man.”

What we do learn here is that you do not have to come from the perfect family background situation to become a very faithful and very blessed man or woman of God.

Now Elkanah's wives were named Hannah (name means gracious woman) and Peninnah (name means Pearl). Many assume since Hannah is named first, that she was his first wife. Hannah had no children and Peninnah had several. It is possible and probable that Elkanah had married Hannah and when she didn't produce children, he took a second wife Peninnah, who had several children.

What is interesting is that even though it initially appears that Peninnah is the blessed one, none of her children are even remembered, but Hannah's son will be remembered. In fact, we study a book that has his name. No matter how great the servant, he came from sinful parents but if those parents purpose to raise those children to fear God and worship God, in the end they will see God do amazing things.

**Fact #5** - Samuel's father was a faithful, reverent, worshipful man. **1:3**

Elkanah was a very pious man. When most of Israel was doing that which was right in their own eyes, Samuel's father was faithful to God. In accordance with the Word and will of God, Elkanah took his whole family once a year, every year to Shiloh to worship God (Deut. 12:10-12).

The tabernacle had been established at Shiloh in Joshua's day (Josh. 18:1). This was located about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Every year a worship feast was held in Shiloh (Judges 21:19) and every year Elkanah would take his family 15 or 20 miles from Ramathaim to Shiloh. He did this year after year. He was a faithful man who took his offerings to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh.

This is the first mention of the title "YHWH (Jehovah) Sabaoth" - LORD of hosts. Dr. C. I. Scofield has a tremendous note about this name, which is worth reading. He said that this is a military designation that refers to the fact that God is the all-powerful God who is able to marshal all powers in heaven and on earth to accomplish His objectives in helping and comforting His people even in times of failure (*Scofield Study Bible*, NASV, p. 387).

It is very likely that this was the perspective that Elkanah had of God. He had an awesome view of the sovereignty of God and he went every year to worship God. He certainly was not a perfect man, but he was a faithful man who took his whole family to worship God. He made everyone in his family travel to worship God.

In **verse 3** we are introduced to two priests who were at the tabernacle and were in charge of worship during this time. Their names were Hophni and Phinehas. They are introduced here because they had replaced an aging Eli. These priests were godless, but it did not stop the faithfulness of Elkanah.

**God will bless Elkanah for going to worship and he will curse Eli for allowing his sons to lead the worship.** Elkanah will be blessed at the same spot these two will be cursed.

**Fact #6** - Samuel's father was a faithful, giving leader to his own family. **1:4-5**

Elkanah saw to it his entire family worshipped God properly. A critical part of worship was the sacrifices and the eating of a meal. He brought the sacrifice and he saw that it was offered by his wives and children. According to Deuteronomy 12:5-7, one was to bring his offerings to God and everyone was to receive a portion of it to eat and they were to rejoice over all they had seen God do. Elkanah gave a portion to everyone in his family and a double portion to Hannah.

**Fact #7** - Samuel's father loved Samuel's mother. **1:5b**

Elkanah loved Hannah. These stories take place in the lives of real people. He may not have been the most sensitive husband to Hannah, but he loved her. He loved his whole family and led them into the ways of God.

**PERSON #2** – I Samuel begins by introducing us to Hannah, Samuel's mother. **1:5c-8**

Now Elkanah had two wives - Peninnah and Hannah. But the narrative zeroes in on Hannah. There are four facts we learn about Hannah:

**Fact #1** - Samuel's mother had her womb closed by God. **1:5c**

God takes a very personal and sovereign interest in every woman and in whether or not that woman has a baby. Do not miss this critical point; it is God who takes full credit for permitting a woman to have a baby (Gen. 30:2, 22; 33:5; Ps. 127:3). Babies are no mistake or accident. They are a sovereign work of a sovereign God. Also not having a baby is the sovereign work of a sovereign God.

Hannah did not have any children to this point in her life and specifically she did not have a son (1:11). At this point in Israel's history, this was considered to be a terrible thing for three reasons:

- 1) Because God said He would bless His people with descendants if they obeyed Him (Deut. 28:11).
- 2) Because it was important to carry on the Jewish family name for land inheritance purposes.
- 3) Because one of the sons born would eventually be the Messiah - no chance with no son.

So if you did not have a son, it was considered to be a horrible thing.

We do not live with the stigma of this culture today. Women who don't have children are not ostracized as they were in Hannah's day. But if a woman does not have children today, she should view it as part of the sovereignty of God and may view it in one of three ways:

- 1) God may be preparing a woman to eventually have a baby.
- 2) God may want a woman to adopt children or raise foster children.
- 3) God may have a plan for a woman not conducive to having children.

**Fact #2** - Samuel's mother was provoked by Peninnah. **1:6-7a**

Polygamy was not conducive to harmony in the home. It promoted rivalry. Obviously Peninnah saw that Elkanah loved Hannah more and she really gave it to Hannah because she had children and Hannah didn't. She would purposely say things and do things to irritate Hannah. She was used by Satan as an irritant.

Jealousy is a terrible sin. When people are jealous of you, they will purposely do things and say things to irritate you. This was an annual event in Hannah's life. Year after year they would travel to Shiloh and year after year Peninnah would rub in Hannah's face that she had been blessed by God with children and Hannah did not have any.

**Fact #3** - Samuel's mother would not worship God properly. **1:7b**

Hannah was somewhat of an emotional wreck. Every year she went into this depressing emotional rut. She would go to Shiloh and they would offer sacrifices and then she would cry and not eat, when in fact the law required that she eat (Deut. 21:15-17).

In all reality here, Hannah would partially disobey God every year. She was going to the services, she was going through the motions, but her heart wasn't in it. Hannah did go to the right place to worship God even when she didn't feel right.

Sometimes a woman will get upset with another woman at church and say I am staying home and not going. She ought to get right back to church because God is still in the business of working in His people's lives.

**Fact #4** - Samuel's mother was comforted by Samuel's father. **1:8**

This apparently was an annual event. Every year Hannah would get weepy and every year Elkanah would try to comfort her and try to convince her to eat and he would say to her "I am better than ten sons."

Elkanah may have been a loving husband, but he was not the brightest counselor. What he should have said is let's pray about this.

**LESSONS:**

**1) When you feel depressed, don't skip worship; go to worship.**

**2) People who are jealous of you will tend to verbally irritate you.**

**Remember:**

**A. They are jealous and Satan is using them as a thorn.**

**B. The final script has not been written.**

**C. In the end you may be the one most greatly blessed by God.**

**3) You don't have to come from a perfect background to become a great servant of God.**