

Practicing Gratitude: 1 Samuel 1:10-11, 27-2:1-2

1. The Story of Hannah

a. Read 1 Samuel 1:10–11

10 She (Hannah) 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.”

b. The Backstory

- “Year after Year,” while going to Shiloh to offer sacrifices with husband, Hannah was barren
- Not only was Hannah distressed, but she was mocked by her husband’s other wife, Peninnah, who had children.
- In distress she made a vow to the Lord: Current Illustration: Dave Bennett
- Eventually Hannah gets pregnant, then waits until her boy is fully weaned, before she follows through with her end of the agreement and visits the high priest Eli.

c. The Gratitude of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:27–2:1-2)

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.

“My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.

2 “There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

- d. **Practicing Gratitude.** I would think it would be so tempting for Hannah to go back on her word. “I’m not giving this child away. I waited a long time for this child, surely the Lord will understand. He knows I can’t bring myself to do it, I love my son. I will do anything to protect him.” That’s NOT what she did.

What caused her to give up raising her son? Gratitude. She was grateful the Lord answered her prayers and opened her wound. So, she practiced gratitude by fulfilling her end of the deal, allowing young Samuel to be raised in the house of God by Eli the high priest.

Hannah demonstrated the absolute highest form of gratitude. This is more than a mindset, like the phrase, “Have an Attitude of Gratitude,” it involves ACTIVE participation. You PRACTICE Gratitude to others by doing something TO THEM. Hannah gave the one person she valued most in life. In retrospect, that had to be hard, but watching her son worship God that day, her heart was full!

2. Scientific Studies Involving Gratitude.

- a. Grateful people enjoy a Better Quality of Life, Two decades of Studies.
 - **Improved physical and emotional health** (You are grateful and Adapt Faster)
 - **Better relationships** (People like being around you. New People Feel Appreciated).
 - **Higher self-esteem** (You are NOT imprisoned by thoughts of Negativity and Comparison)
 - **Longer lifespans** (Less Stress and more focus on Appreciation)

- b. **Brené Brown** is a researcher of human emotions at the University of Houston. She grew up thinking that if you have joy, it will automatically lead to gratitude. However, in her research, she discovered the opposite to be true. It is gratitude that leads to joy. When you practice gratitude to God and to others, the result is joy.

That is why Hannah joyously gave up her son to be raised in God's house. She was grateful to God for opening her womb. She had joy based on all that she'd been through.

- c. **Americans and Gratitude.** Three in five Americans say they'd rather do something else instead of reflecting on what they're thankful for on Thanksgiving. Most would rather watch football, watching streaming media, reading a book, or spending time with a pet.

The study also found that twelve percent of those surveyed would rather play on their smartphone than have a meaningful conversation. Our culture provides the illusion we do not need God or people in our lives. Smartphones, televisions, Amazon and Google have replaced them. The three Primary thieves of gratitude are Self-Focus, Negativity and Comparison to others. Those are the REAL Joy Stealers!

- d. **Western Christians:** In speaking to Irene, who is from Kenya, she says that American Christians don't seem to have the "Joy of the Lord" that she sees in Kenya. Christians do not want to spend a lot of time in prayer and share what they are grateful about.

In fact, many times Western Christians complain about various components of the service. She believes it is because in general, Kenyans have experienced more hardships with food, drink, heat, disease, provision, that they are more dependent and grateful. She believes if hardships like famine and natural disasters come to America, like during "the end times," Christians will have a harder time adjusting and surviving.

We also tend to allow the business of life rob us from time with God and meaningful conversation with others. We can be great complainers and often see no reason to fast and pray on a regular basis.

3. Learning How to Practice Gratitude

- a. **Training your mind** to be more aware of negativity, comparison, and self-centeredness, and to re-focus on what you are grateful about.
- b. **Redeem social media, text messaging, or making cards** to express your gratitude to others. Don't buy generic cards, but write gratitude with your own personality.

- c. **Changing How You Pray:** Sometimes when I pray, I naturally automatically want to start praying about what's on my mind, that revolves around circumstances involving me. I am of that now, and I have learned how to better redirect.

“Lord, I am grateful for another day of life. I am grateful for this playground you created called earth. I am grateful You created me to be able to think, breathe, see, walk. I am grateful that you have given me a spiritual sensitivity. It is hard to believe that You, the God of the universe loves me enough to send Jesus to die for my sins. I am thankful. I am grateful.

- d. **Express Gratitude to others Daily.** Tell someone, or better yet, show someone why you are grateful for them. Be specific. Thanksgiving Exercise. Gratitude Pumpkins. Share (or show) with someone why you are grateful for them before the end of the week.

4. Gratitude Leads to Blessing

1 Samuel 2:20-21

²⁰ Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD.” So then they would return to their home.

²¹ Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD

- a. **God rewards us for the sacrifices we give him pertaining to gratitude.** He blesses those who have such faith. In Hannah's case, He knew forfeiting her opportunity to raise Samuel would be hard, especially as a first time mom who had waited so long. However, not only did Samuel become one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, but Hannah received the Lord's blessing and had five more children.
- b. **Practically Speaking:** Sometimes we pray for things important to us, yet never receive them when we repeatedly ask. Sometimes we wait year after year like Hannah. The important thing is to continue praying and fasting like Hannah. Continue going to the House of God and seeking spiritual guidance. In the process, God is growing you into the person he wants you to become. He is strengthening your spiritual foundation. He is preparing you for blessing and laying the groundwork for you to truly be thankful when he blesses you in a better way than you previously imagined.
- c. **One final thought.** The Lord Demonstrated His Love for You by sending His son down to die for Your sins. Jesus demonstrated love and gratitude by blessing others, including outcasts, then ultimately completing his main mission on the cross. Question: Are You Grateful? No matter what life hands us, we must NEVER forget about the Big picture of why we are here.