



1 Samuel 1:1-28

"I have so many problems with my family. I find it hard to serve the Lord!"

When most of us think of Hannah, we think of her tearful, heart-wrenching prayer asking God to give her a son. In Biblical times, being barren was considered a curse. Much shame was endured by women unable to bear children. Old Testament believers were aware of God's charge to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply" and being blessed with a family was considered God's choicest blessing.

Hannah's story was much like that of many Old Testament wives. Often a man had more than one wife and there was rivalry between the women. This was the case with Hannah. Her husband, Elkanah, was a devoted man—both to God and his family. It was his custom to go to Shiloh every year to offer sacrifices to God. This was a big family affair! His other wife, Peninnah, would go along with her children. This was very sad for Hannah because this was the time she most longed for a child of her own with whom to share the joy of the celebration. To make matters worse, Peninnah would tease Hannah, who was already sensitive of her barrenness. This caused great family friction during what was supposed to be a happy family celebration. Elkanah was aware of Hannah's feelings and tried to comfort her by bringing her a greater portion of the sacrificed offering. The Bible tells us that he gave Peninnah and each of her children a portion of the meat, but he would give Hannah a double portion. Still she would not eat, so Elkanah would ask her, "*Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?*" 1 Samuel 1:8 It was his way of telling her how much he loved her, and how helpless he felt in bringing about her dearest desire...that of a child.

Following one of these feasts Hannah went into the Lord's temple in "bitterness of soul." 1 Samuel 1:10 It was one of those times when she agonized over her infertility. She decided to pour out her soul to the Lord. She was so intent on her request to God that Eli, the priest, thought she was incoherent and perhaps drunk. But Hannah told Eli that her prayer was out of great anguish and grief. God granted Hannah her request and she became the mother of Samuel, a boy she promised to give back to God. She kept her promise and at a very early age, Samuel was brought back to serve the Lord, first with Eli and then later as God's special prophet.

Although they are probably different in nature, there are many family problems keeping people at arm's length from the Lord today. First and foremost, there is the problem of finding or devoting the time necessary to make God part of their lives. Often a household has both parents working which certainly makes time a valuable commodity. They must find time on weekends and during evening hours to do all the things necessary to maintain a home. When children are involved, time becomes even more precious. The nurture and care for a family requires additional hours of tutoring, disciplining and car-pooling, besides extra laundry, food and clothing needs. When these things need doing, something must be sacrificed. Often it is the church and the spiritual needs of the family.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the transparency and accountability of the organization. The text outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data, ensuring that the information is reliable and up-to-date. It also mentions the role of technology in streamlining these processes and reducing the risk of errors.

In the second section, the document addresses the challenges faced by the organization in managing its resources. It highlights the need for effective budgeting and financial planning to ensure that the organization can meet its long-term goals. The text discusses the importance of monitoring expenses and identifying areas where costs can be reduced without compromising the quality of services. It also mentions the role of the management team in making strategic decisions to optimize resource allocation.

The third part of the document focuses on the organization's commitment to environmental sustainability. It describes the various initiatives implemented to reduce the carbon footprint and promote eco-friendly practices. The text mentions the use of renewable energy sources, recycling programs, and the implementation of green building standards. It also discusses the importance of educating employees and the community about environmental issues and the organization's role in promoting sustainable development.

The final section of the document provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It reiterates the importance of maintaining accurate records, managing resources effectively, and committing to environmental sustainability. The text also mentions the need for continuous improvement and the role of the management team in ensuring that the organization remains competitive and successful in the long run.

Other problems confronting families today are divorce and family separation. Although divorce has become more commonplace and many families struggle through it, it causes great pain for all involved. It often leads to depression for the adults and bitterness and cynicism for the children. Family quarrels and custody battles often put the children in the middle, like pawns in a battle. When families are broken up, often their spiritual wholeness suffers as well. Some drop out altogether; others find it hard to take part in any activity with ties to their former status. How should we as Christians deal with problems revolving around the family? How do we involve those people who are overwhelmed with painful family problems and never-ending time pressures? Taking a look at Hannah, whose family problems were anguishing for her, we see her becoming depressed and crying. The Bible does not tell us how often she took her problems to the Lord in sincere prayer. But it does tell us that at one particular time she besieged God with prayer, and He responded by granting her heart's desire. It seems that more of us need to remember our families of today in regular prayer. We need to love them, encourage them, mentor and nurture them so as their families get older they, too, can take on a younger generation and teach them by what they say and do.

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, we ask for Your special blessing on all our families. Help them to set their priorities so they put You above all else. Give them the power to be faithful to You and each other. Make their homes a place where Your love and grace are evident and help them to be forgiving to each other. This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

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