

## HANNAH - “Coping With Criticism”

### “Building Blocks”

1. **(Overall)** We need to remember that Samuel is to the periods of the Judges and Kings what John the Baptizer was to our Old and New Testaments. Samuel was the last of the judges (cf. 1 Sam 7:15 and Acts 13:20). Two important facts emerge from this:
  - a. His “times” were those described near the end of the Book of Judges. Hannah lived during a very dark time. (e.g. the behavior of Eli’s two sons, though tragic, is typical of their times; 1 Sam 2:22-25). This story is as much about the amazing sovereignty of Yahweh in keeping His covenant promises alive as it is anything else.
  - b. Samuel is the “link” between the loose confederacy after the conquest of Joshua and the monarchy prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 17. This is a time of great transition and therefore, great instability. Unfortunately, it is also characterized by great sin.

The amazing importance of Samuel to God (cf. Jer 15:1, where Yahweh puts him alongside Moses!) must also be in our minds as we study Hannah. Having the “long view” of redemptive history (i.e., God’s “Story”) often provides meaning to pain, not just for Hannah, but for us as well. For example, as the readers, we draw amazing comfort from the pain of Ruth and Naomi’s lives when we read the closing lines of the Book of Ruth where we discover that the child born to Ruth and Boaz is the grandfather of David. This “long view” is a source of comfort. And when pain has meaning, it has less sting.

Also, if Hannah’s journey to conception *hadn’t* been what it was, she would *never* had taken Samuel to Shiloh as a boy and given him to God (i.e. dedicated his as a Nazarite from before birth; cf. Numbers 6). In short, he would never have become “Samuel”!

2. **(Q1)** There are three different Hebrew words that are used to describe Peninnah’s harsh treatment of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:6. The word translated “irritate” appears only 13x in our Old Testaments, and in the majority of the occurrences, has to do with the roar of the sea or the crashing of thunder. This is a harsh word, and it carries with it the idea of severe agitation.

Hannah’s name means “favored,” or “grace.” One has to wonder how often she wrestled with the irony of her barrenness and the name her parents had given her? Or, perhaps Peninnah even threw Hannah’s name in her face as her provocation.

3. **(Q2)** The “annual feast” that Elkanah attended was possibly the “yearly feast of the LORD” spoken of in Judges 21:19. Shiloh appears to be the ritualistic center for the Israelites at the very disorganized and scattered time in their history. It was, in a sense, the precursor to what Jerusalem would eventually be: the heart of the nation and the home of Yahweh.



4. **(Q7)** An excellent and very graphic depiction of the corrosive power of sarcasm is Proverbs 26:18-19, *“Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, ‘I am only joking!’”*



## “Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Introduction)** It is vital to have distinguished in your own mind the difference between verbal abuse received from an unbeliever and that from another believer. Our biblical responsibility in each of these two environments is different. As a rule, abuse from unbelievers follows two prohibitions: do not retaliate, do not react:

*“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”* **1 Peter 2:23**

*“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* **Matthew 5:11, 12**

Our biblical responsibility to *believers*, as a rule, follows two admonitions: confront in private and confront in grace:

*“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”* **Matthew 18:15**

*“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”* **Luke 17:3**

2. **(Q4)** “Venting” is a modern notion. It is viewed as almost a birthright. It is rarely of any benefit to anyone. If the topic of “venting” arises, don’t deny its legitimacy, but also don’t neglect to point the group back to Hannah’s method of dealing with her hurt. She “vented,” but *it was to God!* Moses did the same thing about his own perennial frustrations with the Jews. He *never* “vented” to the people or even to Aaron. God *always* wants to hear whatever we want to say.
3. **(Q7-9)** This chapter is about two related, but very distinct subjects: prayer and criticism (facing it and giving it). Don’t allow the study to be “hijacked” by the criticism topic too much. Remember what was mentioned in #2 above. If you’re not careful, members of your group will be “venting” about criticism they have endured rather than seeking how to face it the way Hannah did. In short, don’t let Peninnah become the topic more than Hannah! Even though it would be easy to slowly (or quickly!) get “stuck” hearing group members share specific details regarding the Peninnahs in their lives, be sure to have as your primary goal for this chapter to be moving them *towards* the main point of this chapter — speaking to God in private rather than brooding in public.



## “Going Deeper”

1. **(Q5)** Have group members share their answers to this question.
2. **(Q6)** “What evidence do you see in Hannah’s life that she had a deep relationship with Yahweh? How do you think that was cultivated considering the only scriptures in existence would have been the Torah (i.e. Genesis through Deuteronomy)?”
3. **(Q6)** Considering Hannah’s vow in 1:11, do you think her real prayer was for the gift of a son, or the removal of her shame?