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1 SAMUEL 1:1-11

1 Samuel Series

We're starting a new book today. The book is 1 Samuel. You can open there with me as we pray together to come before the Lord.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word and how there is a story there as well, a big picture of who you are and how you created this world. There was a fall and then you redeemed this world, and then you rescue each one of us as individuals from our own inner weaknesses and sin that we experience. Lord, we're going to pick up a new book in your word today that's part of that story. I ask that you would help us see how that is a part of your big picture, your story of the world and how you created it and designed it, but also help us to see how that is part of our own story and how we can apply the truths we learned from that book to our own lives. So we come before you humbly today and ask that you would teach us. We need you and we ask for your grace to be imparted to us now as we look at your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well since we're starting a new book, let me kind of put it into context. We come to the Bible and open it up and when we do we come to five books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Those five books lay out the bylaws for the organization that God had created out of a family. So the family of Abraham turned into a nation and that nation needed bylaws how to operate, how they would be organized together, what they should do, and how they should live their lives. God designed these bylaws for them because they tied into how He created the world.

So in Deuteronomy, He promises them if you obey these, you'll be blessed; and if you don't, you'll be cursed. Why? Because these are the instructions God gave for running the world. So if we obey His commands, we do what He says, then we tie into how God has created the world and we're able then to be blessed as God has designed for us.

Those are the first books of Moses and we'll look at them occasionally. As we're going through the whole Bible we'll come back again to those books.

But then the next book, the book of Joshua take us into the land, because not only God created this family and this nation, this organization, which was theocracy (not democracy), that comes before the Lord as their leader, but then He gives them a land. That land is provided to them through the book of Joshua. So Joshua goes in, conquers the land, and then it's divided up among all the tribes. So they possess the land. That's the story of Joshua, the conquest.

An interesting thing happens in the midst of this that the Israelites started to drift, I think, in their walk with God. Because the book of Judges, which is the next book in the Bible, they key word that we see over and over again is this: *The people did what was right in their own eyes*. They stopped doing what they needed to do and they started focusing on themselves and not paying attention to what God would have for them.

So God raised up judges, they're called. Judges are rescuers that came into situations. Like Ehud, Samson, and Gideon are the judges and several others came in and rescued the situation from these enemies in the land. For different parts of time the people had little revivals here and there. That's the story of Judges. It's a beautiful picture of God working in people's lives.

Then there's a small book, the book of Ruth. It's a majestic story about a nontraditional family, a mom and her daughter-in-law (all the men in that family died). God uses that picture of Ruth to show how God takes a person who's not even a Jew and brings a line of Christ through that family so they are marked in the book of Ruth in the Bible. It's a beautiful picture of God's redemptive purposes in our lives. So that's Ruth.

Then we come to 1 Samuel. Now 1 Samuel is a story about the kings. Particularly the first king, King Saul. We're going to get introduced to David as well. But in order to do that, we're going to go back to Samuel the prophet. We're going to know who he is because he's going to be the spiritual leader in the midst of this. We're going to go back to even before he was born.

Before we do, I just want to go back to tie these books together by looking at Deuteronomy. Remember that's in the first five books of the Bible. In Deuteronomy 17:18-20 there's instructions there about kings. They didn't even have kings then. But it says when you get a king this is what you're to do: *When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left.*

Wow. That is powerful. If you want to be successful as a king (or for us, since we're not kings, successful in business or successful in your family or successful in your finances), here's the prescription that God laid out in His bylaws in the very beginning.

We're going to see in the book of 1 Samuel that we have Saul who started well, but didn't end really well in his life. He didn't really follow the prescription and we're going to see what takes place. But I just want you to see God has a plan and if we follow His plan good things happen. Those verses just describe some of the good things that take place when we follow His word as leaders.

Open up your Bibles to 1 Samuel 1. As you do, we're going to enter the life of another family. In this family we're going to get an inside look. What would it be like if someone stepped into your family, into your shut doors, and watch how your family really interacts. We would learn a lot, wouldn't we? We'd learn a lot about each other if we were to do that in each other's lives. Well

that's what we get. God gives us pictures of real people and what's going on behind the doors in their lives.

We're about to read a story about a couple who were really challenged in their life because they couldn't have children. Hannah was barren, the Bible says, and that represented a significant amount of pain for them. These are godly people suffering, struggling. We're going to get an inside look into not only that pain but then some other things that are going on that made their family life more complicated.

Life is like that for us. It's a complicated place. I hope today as we look at this particular story we're drawn to the application that exists in this passage of just seeing our deep need and crying out to the Lord and saying, "God, I need you." That is really the application of this whole passage: God, I need you in my life.

1 Samuel 1:1 starts with this story before Saul comes in the picture. In the same way Jesus has John the Baptist as the forerunner and we learn about his birth, now we're coming to 1 Samuel to the very beginning of Samuel's life, even before then, even before Samuel was twinkling in his parent's eye. We have some information about them as parents.

In verse 1 it says – *There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah (Elkanah is the dad or he's going to be the husband in this picture) son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.*

Now our American culture was originally founded by people who were Christians, who established law and so on. So because of that we still have a lot of biblical influence in our culture today. One of the laws in America is that you can't have two wives. It's illegal to have two wives. Now there are some who are of Islamic persuasion or Mormon persuasion that try to get around that. But the law requires that you can't have two wives. So this mention about polygamy here is not something that really applies to us. We kind of gloss over it. That's okay. We don't really have a lot of application for that in your and my life, but I just want you to know it's a real issue in other cultures.

For example, when I was teaching in Kenya, I taught the family courses in Kenya and there were nine tribes represented among my students. So we talked about this subject, about polygamy. There were a number of my students who grew up who their father had multiple wives. I don't experience that. I don't even know what it's like. It's just hard to imagine.

So we discussed that. We talked about polygamy because polygamy is mentioned in the Bible a few times. We see it illustrated by godly people. Like this man. So is that acceptable? It was interesting to hear them talk, these Bible students who were getting ready to go be pastors out there in the community. Here's what they say: It's not a good idea to have multiple wives. We see in the New Testament that an elder is to be a husband of one wife as a model there. But every time we see even in the Bible polygamy in existence, we see problems. We see Sarah and Hagar. We see Rachel and Leah. We see your Hannah and Peninnah. Each time there were problems

that exist in the midst of that. It seems to be not God's best, according to Genesis 1, and every time you see it happen you've got problems taking place in people's lives.

We're going to see that even in this passage here as we look through the dynamics that now exist when you have two wives, almost like two families with one father. It's just an unusual situation for us certainly, but that's where they were. Here's a godly man who has these two wives.

Verse 3 continues the story. *Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. So this one wife had lots of kids. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.* I'm sure him playing favorites in this way didn't contribute to any unity in the family. So there were challenges that existed in the midst of this.

Now let me put this into context so you understand the story and the picture because it's going to develop and you need to understand what's going on. Once a year, probably Passover time, the family would go up together and they would offer up sacrifices. Now there are several kind of sacrifices listed in the Bible in the Old Testament, each one representing something for us and for the people.

For example, there was the burnt offering. That was when you would bring the bull or the lamb and it would be totally consumed before the Lord, demonstrating God's wrath. God's justice was satisfied by a sacrifice and there's nothing we can do except offer that sacrifice to God. It is something that atones for our sin. A picture, of course, of Christ Jesus, and we can do nothing to earn our salvation. The animal is totally consumed before the Lord. A sweet-smelling savor before the Lord, the Bible says.

Another kind of sacrifice is the grain offering or the wave offering. You wave it before the Lord, demonstrating that I want bring all my provisions that God has given to me before the Lord and I want to dedicate myself to Him. It's a beautiful sacrifice that the people had. It was very much a part of their understanding of God and their relationship with Him.

But in this case as they come up before the Lord, they're offering the peace offering, sometimes called the fellowship offering. The peace offering was designed so they had to bring an animal sacrifice. They would bring it to the place, it would be slaughtered, and the shoulder would be given to the priest as their part of the animal, but the rest of the animal was then cooked, barbecued. A delightful time when the person who brought that sacrifice would bring their family and their friends and they would have a feast.

You have to imagine if you're going to eat meat in a culture like this, you don't eat meat very often unless it's going to be a chicken or something like that because you can't kill a cow and eat it before it is deteriorates. So you have to eat it quickly. So it's not very often that you would get to eat a steak dinner or that you would get to eat lamb chops. When you're going to do it, you want to have people around. We're going to kill a cow, let's bring the whole neighborhood over.

Because when you kill a cow you've got 1200 pounds of meat and you've got to do something with all of that.

So that's what happens. They would go up to Shiloh and they would offer this fellowship offering and then it would be this big feast. Everyone would be around. It was this time where they knew they gave a portion to the Lord because this is like having the big table set and God is here as part of the table and we're all fellowshiping and celebrating because this is our time before the Lord. This is an exciting time of what God has done for us. He's provided all these things and we want to be in fellowship with Him. That's why it's called the fellowship offering. The peace offering that we're in this peaceful setting, this peaceful relationship with God because of what He has done for us.

So Elkanah comes up to offer this sacrifice and then when he's got the meat all cooked and everything, he distributes it. He gives a portion to all of his family under Peninnah's motherhood, but then he comes to Hannah who has no children and he gives her twice as much because he loves her. He wants to console her because she's grieving inside because she can't have children. So you've got to give Elkanah some credit here as a husband, as a father, someone who's trying to care for his wives in this situation and be godly and do what's right.

Hannah had a problem and Hannah's problem was that she was barren. She was infertile, as we would call it today. It's a common problem not only in the Bible times. It's a common problem today, where a couple wants to have children and they try to have kids and it just isn't happening.

Just imagine being in that situation. Some of you it's not hard for you to imagine. You've been there and you know what that's like. Just imagine that you decide okay, we're married now, we want to have a family, and we're going to try to have kids. Then time after time, every month you're reminded that, no, it didn't work out this time. We're going to try again next month. Pretty soon after months of that you start saying to yourself, "Will I ever be able to have children?" There's this sense of this is scary. This is part of who I am. This is what I wanted. This is a major problem in my life. This sense of barrenness that she's experiencing is something that's really significant.

This is obviously a family story. Many of us are not in that stage of life where we're trying to have children. Although I try to make applications for family a lot in messages here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope, I also try to make applications for the rest of us in our lives. So what I want to do here is I want to take this idea of barrenness and apply it to us in other areas.

I want you to think for a moment about a dream or a hope that you might have. If you have a dream or a hope that isn't fulfilled then you know what that experience is for that woman who can't have a child. Maybe you want to get on a sport's team and they've rejected you. It's just devastating for you because you know you can play soccer, but you couldn't get on this team. Or maybe you want a job or the job you're in you're not happy with and you just long for something like that. There's this sense of longing that you have in your heart. It's that same feeling that Hannah is experiencing in this moment that I think we're going to see some application for.

I think it's the same longing that we have when there's a challenge in a marriage relationship where we long for wholeness in that relationship. Or there's been a divorce and just long for some kind of a companion or a relationship. Or looking at our kids sometimes and we just long for something different than we see. It's that passion. It's a passion that's tied into who we are as a person that's so important here.

Let me just explain theologically what I think is happening here. God has given every person a spirit. That's what makes us different than the animals. We have a spirit. The spirit that God has given us, our human spirit that we have, longs for purpose in life. So we're longing for this purpose, this drive. Some people find that in things. Some people find it in their jobs. Some people find it in a family. But God designed that spirit inside of us to find wholeness when it connects with the Holy Spirit. So God has designed a compliment to our spirit that He calls the Holy Spirit that we receive as a gift, one of the perks, one of the benefits of salvation. We have the Holy Spirit that comes inside of us and He works with our spirit to provide that purpose that we need.

So the maximum amount of purpose that we can ever experience won't be found in winning a particular championship in sports. It won't be found in getting a special job that we want. It won't be found in having even a family that's successful. That purpose is found in God alone. But as humans we find ourselves longing for certain things. That's a spiritual longing that we have to find ourselves. As parents we want that for our children.

Here Hannah wants a child in her life and she's experiencing this in her life. It's a dream, it's a desire that she has. So as we see this desire that she has in her heart that's weighing on her, then she has the complications on top of that of conflict in the family, a place where we should be able to go to find solace, to find rest, to find what we need.

But we also find turmoil in this particular situation. Notice what it says as we continue on in verse 6. *Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year.* It's not just a one-time thing. It was a continual thing she had to live with over and over again. What pain.

Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah would say to 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?" Sometimes husbands just don't get it. Maybe he should say, "You mean more to me than ten sons." I don't know. But obviously she has this longing to have a child. Adding to the existing problem of barrenness we have this struggle that's going on in family life that complicates all the other issues that are happening. It's painful.

One of the things that barrenness does, we're going to see now as we continue in the passage, is it creates a hunger inside of us, a spiritual hunger for something. I would say that spiritual hunger is for God. Hannah is going to seek God, which is what I think we should be doing in our own lives. I want you to watch as I read the passage the pain that she experiences in her life and I want you to see what she does with that as she turns it over to the Lord.

Verse 9 – *Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish (just look at those words – deep anguish in her spirit) Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.*

I just want to pause here. There's a very important theological concept we need to understand. Only when we recognize our deepest needs can we experience the fullness of God. I could try to convince you to become a Christian by telling you about all the benefits about becoming a Christian. There are lots of them. There are eternal benefits and then there are benefits for right now. If I only talk to you about the benefits of becoming a Christian, you would evaluate them like you do a credit card.

There are lots of good credit cards. I'm very happy with mine. If you want to know about it, I'll tell you. It's got great benefits. You can tell me about your credit card. We can decide which one is better and then we'll try to make a decision based on the benefits. I might need some of those benefits or I don't need those benefits, so I choose a credit card based on the benefits.

The problem is that's not how we choose a Savior. We choose a Savior because we recognize, we come in contact with the deepest needs inside of our heart. We recognize that we have a sin problem. That sin problem corrupts us inside. It rots us on the inside and makes our heart so miserable as a place to be that we make other people and ourselves miserable and we are in bad shape. We are in such bad shape that we are driven to need a Savior.

That passion that we have driving us to need a Savior is what causes us to say, "I want to be a Christian." Not because I want like a credit card, the benefits, it's because I need God in my life. I need Him to transform me. I cannot live without Him.

Those words "I need God" is I think what Hannah was experiencing in the midst of this feast, this celebration, this festival. So she gets up and she prayed to the Lord. She comes to the Lord weeping bitterly. Total dependence. I can't live without Him. There is no other place to go.

Verse 11 – *And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty (God Almighty, the God who can solve any problem, you are the Almighty God who has the power to do anything and everything), if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."* So she goes to the Lord.

When we're dealing with matters of deepest purpose in our lives and the longings that we have, there's only one place that we can go. That's to go to the Lord and pour out our hearts. In this story God is going to answer her prayer and give her a son. It's a beautiful picture of God's grace. It's a beautiful picture of how God uses prayer to draw her to Himself and how God is going to do amazing things in her life.

But there are some times when we are anguished in our spirit and we come before the Lord and He doesn't give us what we want. So maybe you're in that situation today. That doesn't mean you don't come before the Lord. Remember it's His spiritual resources that He wants to provide for the longing in our hearts that we need.

So I want to pause at this moment before we go on in this story. I want to take you to someone whose prayer was not answered in the way he wanted. He didn't get what he wanted even though he was just desperate and longing in a spiritual way in the same way.

We'll go to Jesus Christ when it says in Matthew 26 – *Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.*

Maybe today you're feeling sorrowful and troubled. There's only one place to go and that's to pour your heart out before the Lord. Jesus knows that and we're seeing Jesus' earthly person here coming before the Father as He knows He just needs to go and spend time with the Lord and He needs to pour His anguish out to Him.

He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

There's a time when the pain of our lives becomes so great that we just don't know how we're going to live anymore. It is just so overwhelming to experience what we're feeling at this moment. It's in that moment that both Hannah and Jesus know what to do. They go before the Father, the Lord Almighty. They don't wallow in their pain, or try to think about how they're going to solve it on their own, and become despairing, and even consider suicide. Neither of them are even in that picture. They just know, "I am in deep need. My heart is overwhelmed with pain. I must go and do something about it. I am drawn to the only solution for my life. I must go before God and ask Him to do something here."

He said to His disciples, *"Stay here and keep watch with me."* Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.

The contrast is so great between Jesus' overwhelming pain that He's experiencing and coming before the Lord, and the disciples who are just like "well, here we are," and they just go to sleep. They just don't get it. They're just not experiencing the same thing Jesus is. They just don't get it.

We'll see a similar thing happens with Hannah as we continue this story next week. But this week I just want to focus in on her passion, her desire, what she's doing. She's coming before the Lord troubled and that's where we need to go in our lives. You may not be in that place right now today, but someday you may well be, and I want you to remember today's sermon five years from now, ten years from now and say, "You know, when I am overwhelmed with sorrow and I am overwhelmed with pain because I'm not getting what I want in life, where do I need to go? I need to go to my heavenly Father."

So Jesus calls God, His Father, and He says, “*My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.*” That’s Jesus’ testimony for us and that’s what Jesus does in this situation.

I’m drawn to that because Hannah has a similar passion in her life and she knows what to do with it. She comes before God Himself and she says, “Lord Almighty (the God who can handle anything, the majestic God who we worship and we sing these grand songs to, that we have this fellowship offering, and we come and eat together, and we have this festive time), I am hurting on the inside. I am coming before you to ask for your grace.” And that’s where we’re going to pause today.

We’re going to pick up the rest of this story next time. Because I just don’t want to leave this too quickly in our own lives. Our human spirit has limitations. We can only go so far to pump ourselves up or to be excited or whatever. And then when we get to that point where we are overwhelmed, we need to know that we should have been all along going before the Lord and asking Him to do that deeper work in our lives.

Let’s do that. We are passionate here about what God wants to do in our lives. We are passionate about serving the Lord. It’s a passion that runs deep in our lives.

Young people, I would just encourage you, develop that passion for God now. Don’t wait for a trauma or a problem to come. Just be engaged with God regularly. It seems to be how Hannah was.

God is going to use these two godly people, Elkanah and Hannah, to be the parents of a man that God wants to use for a huge ministry. But it’s going to start here. We’re not even to Samuel yet. We’re only in the lives of these people, the parents that God wants to do a work in their lives. I trust that God will use that and speak to you in your own heart.

So we’re going to sing a song in just a moment that describes that feeling, describes that passion that we have – this desire to come before the Lord and our need for Him. As we sing this song I trust that God will speak in your own heart and you’ll just draw your own heart to the Lord and say, “God, I want to give myself to you anew today. I want you to be the Lord of my life.” It’s a time you can just be quiet and listen to the song, if you want. Or you can sing the song. It’s a beautiful one. Or maybe you’d like prayer in your life and you’d like to come up here for prayer counselors that will be available to pray with you about something in your own life. We’ll pray with you as well.

Let’s allow this next time to be a time of ministry where God is speaking to us and where we’re responding to Him and allowing Him to do that deeper work in our own hearts. Would you stand with me as we pray?

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you now as needy people. We come before you as Lord Almighty. We’re asking you to give us such a revelation of our need, that we’re drawn to you in the deepest part of our hearts today. In Jesus’ name, amen.