

Training Our Children to Live in God's Presence

by Zac Poonen

We must teach our children to live in God's presence from a young age and to keep their promises to God, just like Hannah did with her son Samuel.

Duration: 13:54

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:2-15, Psalm 16:8-9, Ecclesiastes 5:4, Matthew 18:3

Topics: "Child Rearing", "Dedication To God"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of Hannah from the book of 1 Samuel, highlighting her fervent prayer for a child, her vow to dedicate him to the Lord, and the importance of keeping promises to God. It emphasizes the significance of raising children in the presence of the Lord, teaching them to always acknowledge God's presence and live in His ways. The sermon also touches on the concept of dedicating all aspects of our lives to God in the New Covenant, not just a portion, and the need for sincerity and truthfulness in our worship and promises to God.

Transcript

Let's turn to 1st book of Samuel in chapter 1. We read here about a man who had two wives. It was very unusual in Israel. A man called Elkanah, in verse 2, he had two wives.

One was Hannah, the other was Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. So once when they went up to the temple, Hannah was praying and saying, Lord, verse 11, if you look upon the affliction of your servant and remember me, give me a son, I'll give him to the Lord all the days of his life.

One law they had there for those who were dedicated was that they wouldn't cut their hair. And as she was praying, the high priest Eli was watching her mouth because she was only speaking in her heart and her lips were moving with no voice heard and Eli thought she was drunk. When I read a sentence like that, I see how easy it is for us to misunderstand other people.

Do you get that when you read it? We read the scripture and judge ourselves. And I say, Lord, do I misunderstand people when I see them doing something which I think is evil and it may be the most spiritual thing of all? She was not drunk and Eli was supposed to be the high priest. He should have a little more sense, but he was a backslidden, good for nothing high priest.

God judged him. He didn't even know how to bring up his own children properly. Hannah was far more spiritual than him.

But Hannah had a humility to call him Lord. Verse 15, Know my Lord, I am a woman oppressed. I am not drunk.

I've just poured out my soul before the Lord. Don't consider your maidservant as a worthless woman. Anyway, the Lord heard her prayer.

And verse 20, she got a son. And when she got a son, she did not forget the vow she had made. And you know, that was a very difficult vow for a mother who had no children to give that child over to be in the temple for the rest of his life.

I mean, almost from the age of, I don't know what age they weaned them in those days, but even if they weaned them quite late, maybe five years old. Imagine sending your five-year-old child to work in a church for the rest of his life. It wasn't easy.

But she had made a promise, and she kept it. She never knew that her son would grow up to be one of the greatest prophets in Israel. So there are certain things we can learn from that, that when we make a promise to the Lord, we must keep it as far as possible.

In the Old Testament, they were more strict on it. In the New Testament, I'm not saying we shouldn't be strict, but we must be careful when we say something to the Lord. Return with me to Ecclesiastes.

In Ecclesiastes, in chapter 5, verse 4, when you make a vow to the Lord, don't be late in paying it. For He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow.

Ecclesiastes 5, verse 4. It is better that you don't make a vow, than you make a vow and not pay it. Don't let your speech cause you to sin. And don't say in the presence of the messenger of God, it was a mistake.

Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? So we have to be careful about what we say to God. That's one thing which I have stressed many, many times in our church. Anna kept her word.

Our children must grow up knowing us to be people who keep a promise. And if there's some reason why you cannot keep a promise, like you promise to get something for your child and afterwards you discover you don't have the money for it, first thing you should do is pray to God and say, Lord, can you give me some money to help me to keep my promise to my child? And if you still don't get it, for some reason, maybe the Lord doesn't want you to have that. You tell the child, I'm sorry, we don't have the money.

One day when I have it, I'll get it for you. But we must keep our promises to our children. The only promise you're permitted to break is if you promise to give them a spanking and then afterwards you change your mind and say, No, I'm not going to spank you.

That happened to me often, because I felt that the boyhood really was sorry. And I thought a lot about it. Lord, am I breaking my word? And the Lord said, No.

And the Lord said, I said I would destroy Nineveh in Jonah's time, and I didn't do it. So I see that even God once promised to punish a nation and then he didn't punish the nation, so I got some comfort that I was

not ungodly in what I did. But otherwise we have to be careful that we keep our promise, and especially to God.

As I've often said, the Christians tell the maximum number of lies on Sunday morning when they sing songs. Do you remember all the words of the song you sang this morning? I'm almost certain you've forgotten it. Were they meaningful? Did you feel that Jesus was there in front of you when you said, Lord, from morning till night, it's time for me to praise you when the morning begins, and I have 10,000 reasons to praise you, and I look forward to the day when I'll praise you for 10,000 years in eternity.

It takes a while for us to develop the habit of speaking the truth when we sing, because we are so used to, you know, going by the tune, the words which we know. I know it took me some time, some years really, to get into the habit of not thinking of the tune as much as the words and recognizing I'm actually speaking them to God. And that's in relation to the Lord.

In the Old Testament, they had to dedicate their firstborn son to God because that son was saved in Egypt and all the other firstborn died. But in the New Covenant, we dedicate all our children to God, not just the boys and not just the firstborn. Just like everything that was partial in the Old Testament is total in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, one day in seven was God's and six days were yours. In the New Testament, seven days in seven belong to the Lord. Our Sabbath, by the way, is not on a Sunday.

Our Sabbath is seven days of the week, all the time. We're supposed to live in a perpetual Sabbath with a heart that is always at rest in God, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And we don't give 10% of our income to God.

In the Old Testament, it was like that. 10% is your income tax, you pay to God. 90% is yours, just like the government says, you pay your income tax, the rest is yours.

But in the New Testament, God is our Father, so we don't pay income tax to our Father. We love Him, and whatever we want to give, we give cheerfully and joyfully. There's no percentage, according to your ability.

And so, in the same way, children, in the Old Testament, they gave their firstborn son. In the New Testament, we are to give all our children, boys and girls, to God, just like Hannah gave Samuel. Of course, the difference is, in the Old Testament, the presence of the Lord was only in the temple, or the tabernacle, where in those days, there was no temple in Samuel's time.

So, the point is, he wanted her son to grow up in the presence of the Lord all the time. And that's the message for us, that we must teach our children from the beginning that the presence of the Lord is always in our house. And that's why it's very important that husband and wife don't speak to each other in such a way as to drive away the Lord from their house.

And we must teach our children that wherever they go, the presence of the Lord is with them. And they must live in the presence of the Lord all the time. When other children come to fight with them, we must train them.

When the other children are cheating in the examination, remember the presence of the Lord. Psalm 16.9, I have set the Lord always in front of me, and therefore the Lord is at my right hand to strengthen me. If you want the Lord to be at your right hand to strengthen you, for anything, set the Lord always before you.

That's what we must teach our children from childhood. And don't think it is too early. Start from the time they are one year old.

I've heard of mothers, and I believe they did the right thing in laying their hands on their womb when the child was in the womb and praying for that child, even from the mother's womb. So, great responsibility like Hannah had. And see, because she brought up that child in such a good way, he became a prophet from probably the age of five or six.

Amazing. So there's tremendous things that God can do for our children. I remember a missionary lady who came and spoke in CFC many years ago who said she was converted when she was three years old, and she got a call to China.

She was five years old when she heard a Chinese missionary in Europe, and then she could go to China only about 30 years later. But I've never forgotten that, how God can speak to a five-year-old. A person can be born again when they are three years old.

So, the kingdom of heaven is like little children. So let's not think that they are incapable of being in touch with God. Okay, let's pray.

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