

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Hannah's Gift of Increase

The prayer of Hannah in I Samuel is one of the most heart-wrenching prayers I know of in Scripture. In the first chapter of that book, we find a woman desperate to have children, yet God had closed her womb. She prayed and asked God to give her a child so she could give the child back to the Lord.

There are very few situations that are as sensitive as this story. All of us know at least one couple that has struggled with not being able to have children. Many women have prayed that same prayer and have not received the same answer Hannah received. Hannah was blessed with a child, and his name was Samuel.

First Samuel 2:18-19 (NKJV) reads, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." I have always found this passage so interesting because not only did she give a one-time gift (her son), she also brought along a yearly sustaining gift. Each year she took him a new robe.

The robe is the subject of this article. The robe was handmade. The robe required the purchase of wool, and it also required a treatment to make it a certain color. Doubtless she began early in the year to start this process. It was a labor of love.

Hannah made the robes herself. She labored many hours making those robes. Each of them must have been a great work of craftsmanship. In the course of making the robes, she probably spent most of the time praying for her son. Every loop of yarn could have been a prayer for character and integrity.

Hannah also had to estimate the size that Samuel would need each year. As the child grew, so did the garment. Every year the garment got larger, costing Hannah more money and more time. The narrative never really talks about the process, only the regular interval at which she took the gift.

Let's compare that story to our giving practices. Just as Hannah gave a large one-time gift to the Lord, so have many of you. The question I want to pose is: Are you bringing back yearly sustaining gifts to continue the furthering of the mission? Just as Hannah started early preparing to give, so should we. Hannah rearranged time and priorities to make sure that she could provide that yearly gift. She prayed as she worked, and so should we.

Do you have an area of special interest in the Lord's work? Maybe you have given to a building fund at church or a capital campaign at a college and thought you were done. I would like to encourage you to consider a yearly sustaining gift. Don't rob your tithe, but rather reach beyond your regular gift as Hannah did and do something special for some ministry that you love on a regular basis. Hannah's gift sustained a child, and the child blessed an entire nation. Give a gift that sustains a ministry, and that ministry can bless the world.

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