

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Barbara Egbert's Message of May 10, 2009  
"Mothering by Faith"**

**[Today's message examines a woman's created identity and purpose as well as present the lives of two outstanding Biblical women – Hannah of the Old Testament and Mary of the New Testament.]**

**[Topics: Mothers; Nurturing; Relational; Hannah; Mary]**

**Excerpt:** One of the rules of effective speaking is to ask what your audience is like to make sure your message is relevant. So how many of you have mothers? (Audience laughter.) How many of you have a mother still living? How about a grandmother that's still living? How many of you have given birth and are a mother? How many are grandmothers? And how many are great grandmothers? That's wonderful.

Since Barbara likes to understand things from an historical perspective, she wants to start this message about women at the very beginning as discussed in Genesis. So what is the purpose of women and men?

**Gen. 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28) God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.'"**

Now there's something about the components in the male and female that mirror God in a particular way. So today we're going to focus on the female version and specifically mothers. So after God created male and female in his image, he then instituted marriage. And so we read in **Genesis 2:24, "For this reason [the reason was that woman was taken out of man] a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."**

And then God designed women to be mothers. **"Adam named his wife Eve, [Eve means life] because she would become the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20).** So there are two components about Eve's mothering abilities. First she's physically able to give life through birth. And out of this comes the nurturing, the caring and the tenderness that she shares with her child.

And the second component is that God created all women to be relational. Whether a woman has given birth physically, God has placed a component in all women to give life relationally. Many in this room, who have not given birth physically are mothering and giving life to a variety of people relationally – such as their neighbors, or their nieces or nephews or even coworkers in the office.

At this point in the message, Barbara talked about her mom, who is very influential in her life. She has amazing memories of her. For example when she was a teenager, she had this

thought about how her mom was her best friend. Her mom was her coach, her cheerleader, and her biggest fan because of all the time she spent with Barbara teaching her and encouraging her. Even after Barbara has gotten married and given birth to three children, her mother has still mothered her even though she is way past really being responsible for Barbara.

Because Barbara's mother was orphaned at an early age, mothering was important to her. She even sidelined her career because she wanted to invest her relational life into her children. Her mom mothered other young girls that were outside of her immediate family. Now we know that women mother. That's what they do regardless of whether they give birth to their own children.

Now let's look at a couple of Biblical mothers who have been influential in Barbara's life since her teenage years. The first one, we'll look at is Hannah. Her story is found beginning in **1 Samuel 1:1-2.**

**"There was a certain man ... whose name was Elkanah ... 2) He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none."**

Now we know that in certain times in history it was really important for women to have children economically to support the family and also to pass the family name down.

**3) "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. 4) 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. 5) But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb."**

When the verses tell us that God has done something, it usually means that he will intervene later to rescue that person or to change the situation.

**6) "And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 7) This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. 8) Elkanah her husband 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?'"**

Her worth, her value and her significance in her own eyes were diminished by the fact that she couldn't bear any children.

**9) "Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. 10) In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. 11) And she made a vow, saying, 'O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon 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 Hannah made a covenant or vow to the Lord.

**12) "As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13) Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14) and said to her, 'How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.'**

**15) 'Not so, my lord,' Hannah replied, 'I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. 16) Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.'"**

So her identity and value was tied up into the fact that she was unable to have children. Hannah, being a woman who had this nurturing spirit in her, went unfulfilled.

**17) "Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.' 18) She said, 'May your servant find favor in your eyes.' Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.**

**19) Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20) So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the LORD for him.'"**

So God answered her prayer and performed a miracle in her life so that she conceived and gave birth to a son named Samuel.

**21) "When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, 22) Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, 'After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.'"**

So we're talking about the time when Samuel would be two or three years old, then Hannah would give him to the Lord at the temple.

**23) "'Do what seems best to you,' Elkanah her husband told her. 'Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word.' So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him."**

The contemporary version translates the verse this way: "I'm sure the Lord will help you do what you have promised." It was going to take encouragement from God for Hannah to drop off her three year old son to Eli. Now a three year old is probably the most adorable age for any child. And it would be very difficult for any mother to give up her child at that age.

**26) "and she said to him, 'As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. 27) I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. 28) So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.' And he worshiped the LORD there."**

This was a very difficult decision to do for Hannah. And we see in the first 10 verses of chapter 2 that Hannah prays this unbelievable praise prayer of faith to God after she handed Samuel over to him. This is phenomenal woman. Hannah is Barbara's hero.

Now let's pick it up in **1 Samuel 2: 18-19. "But Samuel was ministering before the LORD -a boy wearing a linen ephod. 19) Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice."**

So Hannah waits once a year to visit her little son and makes him a robe bigger than the year before.

**20) "Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, 'May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.' Then they would go home. 21) And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD."**

Hannah was so obviously blessed by God to have five additional children. As we will see, this last sentence is a parallel Scripture of one we will read in the New Testament. Also what does this mean to mothers about their children – are they growing up in the presence of the Lord?

And then in verse 26, we read, **"And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men."** What does a mother have to do to help her child grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men? It's obvious that Hannah laid down that foundation in the first three years of Samuel's life. Obviously he knew that he was a gift and that he was going to be given back to God.

Now let's look at the account of Mary in the New Testament. There are some parallels with the story of Hannah. Now most are probably more familiar with the story of Mary than Hannah. Again the parallel is that both are miraculous conceptions. There is an obvious difference. Hannah was married and seeking to become pregnant. Mary was a virgin engaged to be married and wasn't seeking to become pregnant before her marriage.

**Luke 1:26-38, "In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27) to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28) The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'**

**29) Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30) But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31) You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32) He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33) and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.'**

**34) 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' 35) The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36) Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37) For nothing is impossible with God.'**

**38) 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said.' Then the angel left her."**

We can wonder if Mary grew up with the stories of Hannah? Maybe Hannah was an example of faith to her. Now it was just after this that Mary offered a prayer of praise to God. It's very similar in structure to Hannah's prayer. Both children were wanted. They are gifts of God.

**Luke 2:7, "and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."** Most of us are familiar with the story of the birth of Jesus.

Now let's notice the similarity in the wording when both Samuel and Jesus were presented to the Lord. **Luke 2:23, "(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord.')**" This is a tradition that Mary followed just like Hannah. Mary probably was moved by Simeon when he said, **"my eyes have seen your salvation."**

And then the prophetess Anna came and gave thanks and spoke about the child that was going to redeem Jerusalem. And so Mary stored all these things in her heart. She just knew that her son was a child of God and that something amazing was going to happen.

Now here's another parallel verse in the life of Jesus compared to the life of Samuel. **Luke 2:40, "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."** And when Jesus was 12, it says that, **"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).** Of course we know that when Jesus grew up, God said of him that this is my Son, whom I well pleased.

So what is it about these women that parented and mothered these two young men to be such men of God? Now we know that children are gifts from God. Now we know that some segments of society don't see it that way. Sometimes children may be viewed as an inconvenience. And unfortunately we live in a society now that we can legitimately get rid of a child we don't want. This is so totally against what God designed. Thankfully both Hannah and Mary set the right example of wanting and loving their child. As mothers, we have this little season of life to have and nurture children.

Another parallel with these two women is that they are mothers of faith and gave their children back to God. As a mother, Barbara asked God to help her parent her three children, two boys and a girl because they were all so different. Her daughter at three told her that she wasn't like her at all.

She gave her kids back to God because she really needed help rearing them. She wanted to partner with God to be able to maximize how he wanted them to grow up. They all have their own talents and unique personalities.

Another lesson Barbara learned from Hannah and Mary is to bring her kids into the presence of God. And that comes on a daily basis through prayer and Bible study. Of course she and her husband were involved in Camp and Youth Ministry work. And they saw how important it was for parents to bring their kids to church or to camp or to a youth activity into the presence of God.

Another parallel example was that both Samuel and Jesus grew in favor with God and men because of their mother's nurturing. Now what does it exactly mean to grow in favor? It means to delight, please, or become acceptable. Those are some of the character traits that all mothers should treasure in their children.

God must be pleased when our children reach out to help or to minister to their friends. So we need to consider what we, as mothers, can do to raise our children to be in favor with God and men.

So today we honor our mothers and we recognize the sacrifices they make on behalf of their children. We often appreciate our moms when we, as women, start having our own children. And then there's the appreciation of all the help our moms give us as grandmothers.

And for you mothers who are in the thick of it right now, it's probably the most exhausting phase of your life. It has the most highs and the most lows in your life. It's physically and emotionally draining. But looking back, you will come to see that it was the most fulfilling phase of your life. You will see the fulfillment of your partnering with God to raise and nurture your children. So young moms, hang in there. It may seem like there's no end in sight, but later you will see that it all went by so quickly. The time is coming and all of your efforts will pay off.

Barbara then talked about some of the characteristics of their children. Their son John always had a talent for technology. And at age 12, he built a computer from scratch. And so as a mother, she asked God, "How is this talent going to be used for you?" Now John is involved in summer camp in Colorado building things for camp and involved in ministry work.

Their second son, James, has been a drummer since the age of three or four. He's now involved in a music ministry and is contracted to do a music CD. And then their daughter Brittany at an early age began to imitate people. And now she is a drama major. She used her acting talents at summer camp to entertain and do ministry for the campers. That's the ultimate goal, that God would use their talents for his sake and to bring others so that they may know him.

Some of you may know that Barbara has been writing a book on Jesus and women. In the book, there are three chapters that have to do with mothers. And Jesus obviously understands a woman's heart because he created it. He understands a woman's nurturing ability and that life-giving, relational and emotional component every woman has. And he also understands the mother's heart as well.

The one chapter talks about the widow who lost her son. And Jesus came upon her and sees the tragedy of the situation. She had previously lost her husband and now her only son is dead. They are carrying him out to bury him. It's a tragedy to lose one's husband. And then it's even more devastating to lose your only son who would be able to support you economically and probably more importantly support you emotionally.

And Jesus understood all of this. And so he restored the son's life back to him. That's such a wonderful story. Thank you Jesus for doing that.

The second mother's story is about a Gentile woman, who was out of Jesus' Jewish sphere. She came to Jesus pleading with him on behalf of her daughter, who was demon possessed. Mothers need to take this example of going to Jesus with their children's needs with respect and diligence and with persistence. Jesus told her that because of her faith, her desire for her daughter to be healed is granted.

The third example that was the most challenging to write was about Mary. Here she was at the cross watching her son being brutalized and put to death. Everyone sees Jesus as his friend or spiritual teacher, but Mary sees Jesus as her first born son. Her mothering heart is just devastated. And Jesus' last act of compassion was for the most significant woman in his life. And he made sure that she was well taken care of.

And so when, we as mothers take our concerns to Jesus, he has full ability to listen and to respond to what we are asking him on behalf of our kids, because they really are his kids.

So let's ask a blessing on our mothers as we enjoy this day:

Father we come to you and are thankful for all the examples you give to us in the Bible for our encouragement. Today is Mother's Day and we do honor our mothers. Some of them are right in the thick of it. Some are facing battles with Satan who would like to derail our children and separate them from your love. So we just ask that you would put a hedge around these little lives that you've entrusted to us. Encourage these young mothers and help us to rally as a church to rally around them. Bring these children into your presence and to be with them.

We also ask that for every woman that is here, you would enlarge her heart so that everyone who crosses her path will sense your love, as they encourage, nurture and inspire others. We thank you for all of our women, for all our mothers. And we especially thank you for that amazing example of how you honored your mom, the most significant woman in your life while on the cross. And we pray all these things in your name. Amen.

Have a happy and blessed Mother's Day.

**General Group Question:** Briefly share some of your fondest memories that you have of your mother.

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. What does Scripture reveal about the character traits of women?
2. Do you know of a woman who has been like a second mother either to you or one of your siblings? Briefly explain.
3. What moved you the most about the story of Hannah?
4. What kind of dedication and commitment did it take for Hannah to give up her young son to Eli at the temple?
5. What does a mother have to do to help her child grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men?
6. Why do you think children are referred to in Scripture as gifts from God?
7. How influential was Mary in the life of Jesus?

8. How important is it to ask God to partner with you in raising your children?
9. Could you share the most outstanding Mother's Day you were involved in either as a child or a mother?

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