

Prestonwood Connection

#7 Doing Life...Together

Elkanah & Hannah / As Good As It Gets

1 Samuel 1

October 26, 2005 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, *Elkanah & Hannah / As Good As It Gets*]

[Proverbs 18:10]

The name of the Lord is a strong tower and the righteous run to it and they are safe.

Father tonight, thank You for that promise, thank You for that hope and thank You for that confidence and I pray tonight that as we come to this place, many of us needing refuge, that we would find refuge in the One and the Only Person who is the source of refuge and strength, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that Your Word would be, as though it were, a shield to our faith and Lord that in every way that You would strengthen us and that You would lift us up tonight as we open Your Word and open our hearts in Jesus name. Amen!

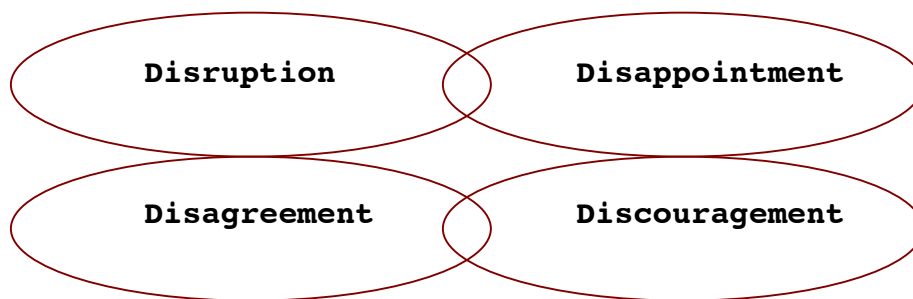
Amen! Well, thank you Rick for a great time and our praise team tonight and for all of our instrumentalists. I'm always grateful for this team and for what they do to prepare and to be here and to be a part of every Wednesday evening and I'm certainly always grateful that you're here and a part of this time as well.

A number of years ago there was a devotional book that was written for teenagers, it's out of print today, but it had a rather interesting title. The title of the book was this, *If God Loves Me Why Can't I Get My Locker Open?* Heh, *If God Loves Me Why Can't I Get My Locker Open?* It's quite a title isn't it? And I wonder if you have ever wondered about something like that in some area of your life, because from the minor irritations to the major interruptions of life, life has things that make life hard. In fact if all of us were to be honest, at one time or another we could put this bumper sticker on the back of our car and it would be an absolute confession to the world about what we think about life and here it is; *Life Is Difficult!* Amen? Yeah! How many of you've had a hard day today? Let's just go ahead and just get it out on the table. Some of you had, now not everybody, but many of you have. You know, I've had a hard day today. Frankly I could put that on the back of my car and drive home tonight smiling saying yep, that's it, life is difficult and it is so true for us that when we face life in all of the various experiences and varieties in which it comes to us that one of the most common things that we all recognize about life is the fact that life is difficult...difficult. And I

believe that the difficulties that we face in life complicate our relationships. We're talking about relationships here on Wednesday nights and trying to learn some relationship secrets from the Bible and one of the things that is absolutely clear is that not only is life difficult, but that difficulties in life complicate our relationships. Sometimes I could handle the problems if I just didn't have to deal with the people too. Heh, but it's the people and the problems that come together and that make life so difficult and that life gets even more complicated and therefore when we talk about this idea of Doing Life...**Together**, we have to understand that Doing Life...**Together** means that we have to share the hardships and the heartaches of life. Someone once said:

"Marriage halves our grief's, doubles our joys and quadruples our expenses."

Well, that's very true, it's true in marriage, but it's true in every other arena of life and every other area where we are involved in relationships, because whether you are a married couple brought very closely together in the demands and responsibilities and roles that you fulfill in life or whether you're simply involved in the other relationships with family and friends and work and school and all of those things, the challenges of life intensify the challenges of our relationships and I believe that every person and every relationship in life will engage in one of 4 spheres at one time or another and sometimes in all 4 of these spheres at the same time. What are they? Every person and every relationship is going to have to deal with disruption, with disappointment, with disagreement and with discouragement.



Disruption, Disappointment, Disagreement and Discouragement! I guess what I'm saying is that when you look at your life in relationships you have to understand that it cannot only be a 3D experience it can be a 4D experience. It can take on whole new dimensions in depth of challenge and difficulty trying to work together and trying to get along and so it is that every one of us in life, both individually and collectively in our relationships have to deal with the impact of these 4 spheres of challenge and when the reality of that sets in in your life when ever and how ever that may be you will come to understand and even at times to agree with the words of Anais Nin who said:

"We've all been poisoned by fairy tales."

"We've all been poisoned by fairy tales."

Fairy tales are a wonderful thing, but life is not a string of fairy tales and for every one of us in our lives, our walk and our relationships there are going to be things that are not going to be so fairy tale. It's not true in my relationship with God, it's not true in my relationship with my wife, it's not true in my relationships with fellow believers, it's not true in any area of life. Life does not simply have a magical, happy ending. We have hope, we have confidence, we have great assurance of what God has promised and planned for us, but the reality is that in life we have to deal with all of these fears of challenge and it is impossible to be in relationships and to avoid a challenge in one if not all of these spheres of life with others. And so one of the most important life's secrets that we can learn about relationships is that one of the most indispensable and one of the most essential ingredients in all human relationships is one that you rarely hear anything about. We hear about communication skills and we talk about self-control and we hear about all sorts of things, about compatibility and about a..., commitment and all these things and they're all important, but can I tell you that one of the things that the Bible teaches to be absolutely, indispensable and fundamental to every relationship is that a relationship has to have faith...faith. Faith is one of the essential qualities of the relationship. Faith helps you to walk through life obstacles and to break through life's barriers and therefore dealing with difficulty and coping with crisis takes us and requires of us that is faith in life and in friendship with one another.

Tonight I wanna introduce you to a biblical couple who faced some very real difficulties in their lives. We find their story and their account in 1st Samuel, chapter 1 and so I want you to open your Bible with me to that Old Testament passage and tonight I wanna introduce you to a couple you may or may not know them, it's very likely that you know their son, very possible that you know a..., the woman in this passage. Most of you wouldn't have a clue who this man was or whether or not his name was really even found in the Bible. But I think that you're gonna know more about him after tonight and about them and something that we can all learn tonight about some of the difficulties and the challenges that we all face in life. 1st Samuel, chapter 1 in verse 1 says this:

¹Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph an Ephraimite.

Whew...let me just pause a minute and catch my breath, that was hard to get through I don't mind telling you. Some of you searching for names for your next child or grandchild just take em right there, there's a...there are some very unique names. Heh, but here's what the Bible tells us about this man. If you didn't get anything else, the man's name, I want you to meet there is Elkanah, E-L-K-A-N-A-H, Elkanah. Verse 2:

²And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. ³This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. ⁴And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife to all of her sons and daughters. ⁵But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶And her rival ~~was provoked~~...also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb. ⁷And so it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

Well, an interesting passage of Scripture. It's interesting because on the one hand we see a man who is introduced to us as coming and...from a line of significant people in Scripture and a man who is seen in worship. He's leading his family to worship, he's going to the house of the Lord, to the place called Shiloh. This was the time of the judges and the people were in different places and they went to Shiloh as one of the places that they would go and worship. The city of Jerusalem had not yet been established as the place, the holy place of the people and so the people were there moving around and they would go to this place called Shiloh during this period of the judges, but just as much as we're impressed on the one hand with what the Bible tells us about him spiritually, we're a little bit underwhelmed and a little bit frustrated about what we read about him when we realize he's got 2 wives and there's all this conflict going on in his life. But let me just tell you about the days of the judges. It can be totally summarized in Judges chapter 21 in verse 25, it's the end of the book, this is what the Bible tells us:

In those days there was no king in Israel; and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

That's what was going on in the society. There was no king in Israel and everyone just did what was right in his own eyes. It was a time of anarchy in Israel. It was a time in which there was all sorts of...of worship that was going on, not only to the true and living God, but to pagan gods and...and to all sorts of...all forms of wrong expression of religion and of sorcery and every other thing imaginable. It was a time of great wickedness. It was a great time of great lawlessness and there were all sorts of things going on in the society of that day and in the backdrop of the time of the judges we read about this couple, this family and what was going on with them.

I read, not long ago, an article about a man who was having open heart surgery in England and while he was there having open heart surgery something rather unusual happened in the waiting room, his wife showed up and then his second wife showed up and then his third wife showed up and they all met each other at the same time in the waiting room while he was in surgery. Heh, don't you know he wished he did not come out of surgery, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh. Cause needless to say it was a day of rude

awakening in this man's life. He was living a lie. He was living and was experiencing something that was only going to ultimately be exposed and bring great heartache in his life and yet that's exactly what we see and meet here in the life of Hannah and Elkanah. What is it? We observe the crisis in a flawed marriage. We observe...observe a crisis in a flawed marriage. We have people here who on the one hand are people that the Bible tells us about, who are people of faith, but they're also people who are living a life that is not according to the plan and to the purpose of God. They're not by any means a perfect couple. You can't help but like what you read about Elkanah and Hannah, but there's this other factor, this woman called Peninnah and because Peninnah is in the picture and there are two wives and not just one, there is a flaw, there is a problem in this marriage.

Multiple marriages, and it's not just something for the ancient world. You might be interested to know that the most recent issue of Time Magazine featured an article on the fact that HBO has a new show planned to come out this summer, it's called, *Big Love*. *Big Love* is about a Utah man and his 3 wives. The story unfolds as Bill Henrickson keeps his wife Barb, Margene and Nicki in adjacent houses where they run the extended household jointly, but harbor simmering jealousy. And HBO is launching a television broadcast to feature this next summer. Well, it's something that is a very interesting issue and one of the most common questions that I get about the Bible is, why did all these guys in the Old Testament have multiple wives? And can I just clearly stand here tonight and tell you it was a sin. It was wrong! It was cultural adaptation. It was everything that God did not want them to be, but one of the reasons that I believe the Bible's the Bible is that the Bible doesn't try to do makeovers and doesn't try to do brush-ups on people to make them look better. The Bible gives us people as they are and here as they are in the ancient culture these people were people who though God had clearly established the standard, one man and one woman for life, they had begun to adapt to the cultural standards and the cultural conveniences of that day. One Bible commentator puts it this way:

"While it is evident then that some very important individuals, both those who were godly and ungodly in the history of Israel engaged in polygamy, the Old Testament clearly communicates that the practice of having multiple wives was a departure from God's plan for marriage. This is conveyed not only in Scripture verses that seen unequivocally to prohibit it, Deuteronomy 17 and Leviticus 18, but also from the sin and the general disorder that polygamy produced in the lives of those who engaged in this practice."

It was wrong by standards and let me tell you something, one of the other things the Bible makes very clear to us, it was wrong by experience, because nowhere do we read about this as being some big, happy family. Instead we read just the opposite, that there were problems, there were injuries, there were conflicts and nowhere do you see it better than you see it in the life here of Elkanah and Hannah, because there was this intense jealousy between...between Peninnah and Hannah and the result of

that was something that created great conflict in the family and great injury to both of them. But to make matters worse, not only was there this issue of him having two wives, one of the wives, Hannah, could not have children. They had a problem with infertility. Go home tonight and people are gonna say what did they do at church? Well, we talked about everything from polygamy to infertility, that's what he talked about tonight. Heh, that's what I thought about calling this message, From Polygamy To Infertility, I thought, boy, that'll really draw em in won't it? Huh? But it was the other problem, it was the other flaw in this marriage. While he truly loved Hannah, the fact that Hannah was not able to bear children had created something of even greater injury to them. It was not only the jealousy that was brought between the two women, but it was the injury in her life and in her heart knowing that she was struggling with a sense that she felt like a failure. She felt as though she was not able to fulfill her purpose and that was especially true in the ancient world when so often it was seen that a man would take on multiple wives to produce multiple children because it was the generations of children that made a man strong and rich and to have profile in the community. It was all about the culture. It was all about what they could do and what they could be and so here she is a woman without children and she's struggling and she's wrestling and she doesn't know what to do and no doubt as we read in this passage we will see that Hannah was struggling with her self-worth because she was unable to have children.

Now we know clearly today that infertility is a major problem in our world. We know that 1 out of every 6 couples has problems...have problems conceiving children. It's not a hidden thing any more it is a very real thing and especially today in a day when many people are waiting later to get married and delaying the time that they have children and then begin to try to start a family and find that that is frustrated or limited by something that happens or doesn't happen in their lives. It creates another whole series of conflicts and let me tell you that is a formidable foe and a formidable flaw when it begins to happen in people's lives. And so here they were, dealing on the one hand with the conflicts of this polygamy and on the other hand with the intensity of this conflict brought on by infertility. And infertility is a silent suffering. It was George Elliot who said:

"There is much pain that is quiet, noiseless and vibrations that make human agonies that are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence."

That's just a way of saying we have hurts on the inside that other people don't know about and I know tonight I'm speaking to some people who know this hurt, but I know I'm also speaking...I'm talking about infertility not polygamy...and so I...I'm saying that I know that there are people tonight who have this hurt, but I also know that there are people tonight that have other hurts in their lives and what you deal with everyday is something that maybe no one else sees or knows about you and that is that there is something that is flawed in your life and there is something that you are struggling with in your relationship and it's one of those 4 dimensions

that we talked about and your dealing with it. Well, how did they deal with this? Well, the Bible tells us that Elkanah tried to deal with this in verse 8, he said to...to Hannah, it says:

Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved?..."

Listen to what he says:

"...Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Baby aren't I enough? And she said, no way! [pause for congregation laughter] You know what he was sayin to her? You know Hannah maybe this is just as good as it gets...as good as it gets. A very interesting movie by the way, eccentric Jack Nicholson, a guy that I probably have very little in common with, but who I like his eccentricities in some of his movies. Helen Hunt a single mother and there's all these human flaws in the movie and the bottom line is do you ever just wonder if life is just as it is, is just as good as it gets. Heh! Isn't that a fear sometimes that this is as good as it's gonna get, but I think that's good and I think it's helpful, in fact I encourage every young seminary student that there're two movies they is *As Good As It Gets* and the other is *What About Bob*. I've since found them to be brilliant movies to help them to cope with issues of the ministry. If you haven't seen that one you certainly need to and every minister knows it very well. So, anyway I'll leave that, that's...that's enough said, but I say all that to say that's what it came down to. They had to wonder is it as good as it gets.

But that takes me to the second part of this story tonight and that is that we hear the prayer of a desperate woman. We've seen what's happening between Hannah and Elkanah, but now let's see what happens with Hannah herself beginning in verse 9, the Bible says:

⁹So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. And Eli the priest was sitting on the seat of the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. ¹⁰And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.

Obviously she didn't think it was enough. She couldn't deal with the fact that that might be as good as it gets and so the Bible says that:

¹¹...she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, than I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." ¹²And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. ¹³And Hannah spoke in her heart; and only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So therefore Eli thought that she was drunk.

And so the priest starts dealing with her as though some drunk has

stumbled into the temple and he needs to get her out of there. But a beautiful thing happens, he pauses to learn and to hear of her petition and he ultimately tells her to go in peace and that the God of Israel will grant the petition that she's asked of Him and she goes away, she washes her face, she weeps no longer and there's an incredible picture of what happens in this woman's life as she prays and as she seeks the Lord. What a beautiful picture of prayer we see in the life of Hannah. It was the source of her focus, it was the source of her strength and one of the things that is so true about prayer is that prayer is a means of release. It's a means of release when our lives are burdened and when our circumstances are overwhelming and God cares for people who are afflicted and comfort and who are...and who are hurting and oppressed. The Bible says:

[Psalm 51:17]

A broken and contrite spirit God will not despise.

And one of the things that I love in this passage of Scripture is that what we see in the life of this woman is the genuineness of her faith as prayer becomes the life source for her in this desperate circumstance. I believe that prayer is the life source of every Christian in every desperate circumstance and while we do not always know where we will go to the other side of the journey when we pray, prayer is the powerful life source that a Christian has to call upon the Lord and to find His strength. **WHAT IS PRAYER?**

Well, for one thing prayer is **PETITIONING GOD WITH OUR NEEDS**. When you have a need in your life one of the things that you do with that need is you take it to God, you bring it to the Lord. You specifically don't try to hide it, don't try to hold it, you know that God knows about it so you take it to Him and you give it to Him and prayer is petitioning God. It's a way to focus on the issue, but to knowingly and consciously say Lord here it is and here I am.

Prayer is something else. Prayer is **WAITING ON GOD THROUGH THE STRUGGLES**. When we're going through struggles in life prayer is a way of waiting on God. What does it mean to wait on God? Does it mean to just sit there and twiddle your thumbs and say okay I'm just waiting on God? No! Waiting on God is not just sitting there twiddling your thumbs saying okay...okay...okay. Waiting on God is...well it's like going to a restaurant. When you go to a restaurant they have someone who comes to the table to help you. What do we call those people who come to help us in a restaurant? Waiters or servers right? Servers is the more common term, but for many years we called them waiters. Now have you ever wondered since you're the one sitting there waiting why they call them the waiters? Because to wait on someone is to attend to someone, to give attention to, to give focus to someone and when the Bible says that we are to wait on the Lord, the Bible is teaching us that in the midst of struggle we are paying attention to God even more than we're paying attention to our circumstances.

And then prayer, the other thing that makes it so wonderful is that prayer is **BELIEVING GOD THAT HE WILL ALWAYS PROVE FAITHFUL AND TRUE** in my life.

There are times in my life when I look and say this is as good as it gets, but I can always fall back on the fact that I can prove that God is faithful and true. Jerry Bridges is a popular speaker and author. He's best known for his book entitled *The Pursuit Of Holiness*. It's a great book, but he wrote another book that's lesser known and it's called *Trusting God, Trusting God Even When Life Hurts*. He opens the book by talking about the fact that suddenly and invasively at 14-years-of-age his father died and all of his life he had to deal with the loss and the absence and the ache of his father being gone, but in this book called *Trusting God* he writes these words and I share them with you tonight because some of you are facing some desperate things in your life. He says:

"I sympathize with those who find it difficult to trust God in adversity. I've been there often enough myself to know something of the distress, the despair and the darkness that fills our souls when we wonder if God truly cares about our plight. I've spent a good portion of my adult life encouraging people to pursue holiness, to obey God, yet I acknowledge that it often seems more difficult to trust God than to obey God. The moral will of God is given to us in the Bible and it is rational and reasonable, but the circumstances in which we must trust God often appear irrational and inexplicable. Yet, it is just as important to trust God as it is to obey Him. When we disobey God we defy His authority and despise His holiness, but when we fail to trust God we doubt His sovereignty and we question His goodness."

Can I say to you tonight that life is full of discrepancies and there are moments in life when we all think this is as good as it gets. But no matter where you may be and feel that you have a limitation that says it's as good as it gets may I bring one other greater truth to that and that is that God is good. God is good! And in a life where we have no assurances, but we have that one assurance that God is good then I submit to you life doesn't get any better than that, because of who God is and what God is like.

So that takes me to the final part of this text tonight and that is that we are to **TRUST A SOVEREIGN GOD WITH OUR GREATEST LIFE CHALLENGE**. Trust a sovereign God with your greatest life challenge. We've seen the flaws in Hannah and Elkanah and their family. We've seen the desperation of this woman in her prayer, but now we come back to you and to me and to the issues that we face in life and what do we learn from this couple and what do we learn about as good as it gets? That we are to trust a sovereign God with our greatest life challenge and every one of us must come to a place where faith can fuse and fortify us in a crisis, but can also build our relationships just as much as doubt and distrust can destroy our relationships. Isn't it interesting how one person and one friendship and one family and one couple can go into a crisis and come out on the other side and they're stronger and how another couple, another family, another friendship goes in and they're destroyed? I believe one of the things that can make all the difference for you and me is the faith factor, when we really let faith work in us and so there's some...there's some stakes, some

tent stakes, as though it were, there are some pegs that I wanna give you to step away with tonight, to help you and to help me to remember and to hold even when we're going through life's challenges.

The first is simply this that **GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN HIS JUDGMENT**. I don't see life like God. I don't think like God and I always have to come back to the fact in my life whether I like life as it is or not that God is sovereign in His judgment. The Bible reminds us of this in Romans 11:33 & 34:

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"

God is sovereign. And though I don't understand His judgments, the judgments of the Lord are right. Do I doubt sometimes? Sure! We all do, but I learned a long time ago when somebody said it and said it well:

"Your arms are too short to box with God."

Heh, swing all you will, but you're probably not gonna land a punch, because God is sovereign in His judgments.

There's something else that I want us to see tonight and that is that **GOD IS INFINITE IN HIS WISDOM**. He's infinite in His wisdom. Isaiah reminds us of this when he says of the Lord in Isaiah 55: [verses 8-9]

⁸"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor My ways your ways." Says the LORD. ⁹"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

And I have to trust the wisdom of God even when life hurts.

And then there's this confidence that **GOD IS PERFECT IN HIS LOVE**. The Bible says perfect love casts out fear and God is perfect in His love. I love the way that the Scripture says it in Romans 8: [verses 35, 38-39]

³⁵Who can separate us from the love of Christ?...

And look at the very first thing.

...Shall tribulation,...

Shall any form of tribulation separate me from the love of God?

...or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?

³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You can count on God's love and that whatever comes to your life through the fingertips of God will always be filtered through the fingertips of His love. Now what happened to Hannah? Well, there's an incredible ending to this story for the Bible goes on to tell us here that after she left that temple that about a year later a baby was born. The little boy's name? Samuel, in fact this whole book, 1st Samuel and the other book 2nd Samuel is all about the life and the ministry of Samuel. He became the greatest of all the judges of Israel. He was the judge who ultimately anointed the first king of Israel, Saul, not by his desire, but by the will of the people and ultimately by the provision of God and then he anointed David who was king and who was the divinic covenant of which we ultimately saw the coming of the covenant fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Samuel's an incredible person in the Bible and it's from this passage of Scripture beginning in verse 25 and following that says that after this little boy Samuel was born that Hannah did what she had promised, she and Elkanah brought this little boy, probably 2 or 3 years-of-age back to the temple and they dedicated him to the Lord and his life to the service of the Lord. And did you know it's from this passage of Scripture that we take our practice of baby dedication? It's not an ordinance. It's not like baptism and the Lord's Supper, but it is an observation from the Scripture and what a beautiful observation of parents celebrating the grace of God and the gift of children and taking their children and giving them to the Lord, but the other factor is that they gave themselves to the Lord, the parents to the Lord and all of that is seen here in this incredible picture of this man and of his life and of what God did and it was in and through the life of Samuel that ultimately said, no Hannah, Elkanah is not as good as it gets, Samuel will be as good as it gets. And God did something wonderful and God performed a miracle.

I have to tell you tonight that this story is much more than an ancient story to me. I love the story, I'm encouraged by the story, but Connie and I had been married for 7 years and there was a problem. It wasn't the 7 year itch, we weren't unhappy with each other, but we were struggling because 7 years into marriage after a storybook romance, finishing some major life goals and moving forward in life and buying our first home and starting in the ministry and success, success, success, turn the page, put on the periods, exclamation point, turn it again, keep goin and then suddenly, suddenly and unexpectedly we began to face the reality that we were getting stuck in a stage of life. Others were going on and starting their families and we were not and we couldn't figure out what was happening and we found ourselves in the very position of Elkanah and Hannah and yes one day I looked at her and said isn't it enough that you have me? [laughter] I just didn't know it was biblical. [laughter] Heh, and then we started to pray and I can remember days when I would pray because I saw hurt in her and I couldn't fix it and I couldn't make it right and I was hurt and frustration in me and we never knew why. We'd go see doctors and talk to them and over and over we'd hear the same thing, in 95% of the cases this fixes the problem but for some reason you're in the 5% of unexplained, we really don't know. And there we were and so we were there as good as it gets. But God in His infinite wisdom and His

marvelous grace chose to do something in our lives that was completely different than anything that we planned or prepared for, He chose not to give us children naturally, but to give us children providentially and God put a little boy in our lives by adoption and a little girl in our lives by adoption and through that process we have shared a journey of life that has been completely unexpected and overwhelmingly fulfilling. And I say that tonight to say to you that through that experience I learned one of the greatest lessons of life that is through the birth and the gift of our children. Was it an easy experience? No! And was it hard? Yes! And did it hurt? A whole lot! But Ben Franklin once said:

"Those things that hurt instruct."

And I learned a lot from it. But everything that I've learned from this experience I can put in a statement that I want to give to you tonight and it is this statement.

That God at times in life will allow you and me to travel pathways that we would have never chosen in order to experience blessings that we could have never comprehended. There are times in your life when you will think that God has forgotten that you don't know how to open the locker heh, and you will say God what is going on in my life? But I'm telling you that there are things that you wouldn't choose that He allows in your life that lets you experience things you could have never comprehended. It happened to Hannah and Elkanah, it happened to David and Connie and I want you to know it can happen to you, because when life is only as good as it gets don't forget that God is good and it doesn't get any better than that.

If you know Him you can know and taste His goodness. [Psalm 34:8]

Oh taste and see that the Lord is good;

It begins when you look at Him and then when you taste of the greatest thing He offers the gift of life in Christ, salvation. Jesus came and died on the cross for our sins, He was separated from the Father and took our sin and our suffering through the shedding of His blood on the cross, through the burial and the tasting of death in order that we might taste and experience life and the starting point for a relationship with God is understanding that life is not as good as it gets, God is good and made a way of life that is eternal and that is complete for every one of us. And if you've never tasted that I want you to experience that even tonight.