



Strength for the Unfinished Story

FREE SAMPLE | SESSION ONE

By Pastor Michael Cooke

You do not have to solve your sorrow before you receive care.

1 Samuel 1 / Psalm 13 / 1 Kings 19

Bring your Bible. Bring an honest heart. You do not need a finished testimony to begin.

The care you do not have to postpone

Read: 1 Samuel 1:1-20. Then read verses 21-28 to see where Hannah's story goes.

Enter the scene

The journey to Shiloh repeats year after year. So does the provocation Hannah suffers. Elkanah loves her, but his love does not remove her sorrow. She weeps and cannot eat. When she later prays, Eli sees her moving lips and makes the wrong judgment about what is happening.

Hannah answers him. She names her sorrow and explains that she has been pouring out her soul before the Lord. In verse 17, Eli tells her to go in peace and asks that God grant her petition. Verse 18 records her departure, her meal, and her changed expression. Samuel's birth is recorded in verse 20.

Notice the sequence without making it a formula.

Stay with the detail

Hannah's meal does not answer every question raised by her suffering. It does show us that the story contains care before it contains the child.

I want us to notice what we sometimes do with an unanswered prayer. We can make it the condition for receiving anything else. We will rest when the problem is resolved. We will let someone near when we have something happier to say. We will accept kindness when we can explain why everything happened.

Meanwhile, the meal grows cold.

You do not have to solve your sorrow before you receive care.

That is an application we can draw from the scene. Hannah's eventual pregnancy belongs to her particular story; it is not a promise that every reader will receive the same answer. Nor does her changed expression give us permission to judge the faith of someone whose tears continue.

Let the meal invite you. There may be a kindness within reach that cannot remove the burden but can help sustain the person carrying it.

Stay with the passage

Look closely

1. Compare verses 7, 10, and 18. What does each verse actually say about Hannah's eating, praying, and expression?
2. In verses 12-16, what does Eli observe, what does he assume, and what does Hannah explain?
3. What happens between Eli's blessing and Samuel's birth? Which details would disappear if we rushed straight to verse 20?

Bring it into your life

1. What care have you been postponing until a larger problem changes?

2. Who can listen without needing you to perform happiness? What could you ask that person for?

3. Where might you be mistaking another person's outward expression for the whole truth about them?

Practice: Receive one ordinary kindness this week. Name it specifically: a meal, help with a task, a listening conversation, or time to rest. You may still feel sorrow afterward. Receiving care does not require a particular emotional result.

Prayer: Father, help me bring my whole heart before You. Make me willing to receive the care available today, and patient with people whose grief I do not fully understand. Amen.

Carry this into your day

Read 1 Samuel 1:7, 10, and 18 again. Let the order of the story stay with you: sorrow, prayer, then a meal before the birth.

Her story is unfinished. Her life is still being sustained.

One kindness I can receive today:

Keep studying with us

This is the complete first session of Strength for the Unfinished Story. The full October pack continues with Psalm 13 and Elijah in 1 Kings 19, with reflection questions and a seven-day response journal.

Beginning October 27, 2026, the pack and companion reflection, **He Came Back a Second Time**, are included with the Tuesday teaching for paid Cooke Revivals subscribers.

If this study has helped you, you are welcome to become a paid supporter for \$5 a month or \$50 a year. Your Thursday letters and daily Notes remain free.

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Scripture: 1 Samuel 1, KJV. Teaching phrases are summaries and applications, not additional Bible verses.