

“And (Hannah) 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. ... So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.’” (1 Sam. 1:11, 28)

Text: 1 Sam. 1:11, 28 A 2/2/25 Eph. 6:1-4 Lk. 18:15-17 Ps. 127

Hymns: 628, 759, 625, 451

GIVE YOUR CHILDREN TO THE LORD

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Martin Luther wrote:

Some are now saying: If my son learns enough to earn a penny, he is learned enough. Nowadays nobody wants to rear children for anything else than the knowledge and ability to make a living. All that people think about is that they are free and at liberty to rear their children precisely as they please, as if there were no God who has given them different instructions, as if they themselves were God and lord over their children. ... They bring about the downfall of both the spiritual and the temporal estates as well as the ruin of both domestic and child training. (What Luther Says, vol. 1, p. 450, #1331)

How well those words written over four hundred years ago describe the sad state of so many families and young people today. They point out the vital importance of the Christian education and upbringing of our own children.

There was a believer in the time of the Old Testament named Hannah. She and her husband had not been able to have children, and it broke her heart. For the Hebrews it was a disgrace not to have children. The Bible says, *“Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward”* (Ps. 127:3). Can any of us parents forget the wonder of seeing our children for the first time? Another little person has come into the world! Another soul! Maybe a husband and wife didn’t plan this child they’re having, but GOD did. God doesn’t say our children are a mistake, an accident, or a burden. God says our children are a *“GIFT”* from Him. The Bible tells us that before Creation, God looked ahead in time and chose all those who would be His people. Every Christian child, baptized and brought up to know the Savior through the Gospel, EVERY Christian child is a child of God whose name has been written in God’s book of life. *“I have called you by name,”* the Lord says, *“you are Mine”* (Is. 43:1).

Hannah prayed with all her heart that God would give her a son. God finally let Hannah and her husband have a baby boy whom they named Samuel. (This is the Samuel who grew up to be a faithful prophet of God, written about in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.) When her baby boy was born Hannah exclaimed, *“The Lord ... makes alive”* (1 Sam 2:6). She knew that she was able to have her child, Samuel, because God in His grace and mercy had given him to her. She knew her child was a gift from God, and she was grateful to God for His gift.

God intends children to be a gift from Him. The terrible things some people do to their children, and the terrible attitude some people have towards their children do not change that fact. All of our children are gifts from God. God has placed our children into our care to love and cherish and nurture and bring up as His children.

When Hannah prayed for a baby, we're told, *"She made a vow, saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if You will only look on 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.'*" When Samuel became three years old Hannah kept her word and brought him to stay and serve at the temple. She said, *"Now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord."* Like Samson and John the Baptist, Samuel was dedicated through the Naziritic vow to serve the Lord all his life. God had given Hannah and her husband a child, and they had given their child to God.

How would we feel if, like Hannah, we had to wait and pray so long for a child, finally have one, have him until he was only three, and then have to give him up? It must have been terribly hard. We love our children dearly, but we must remember that first of all they are God's children. Are we entrusting our children, body, soul, and life into their heavenly Father's hands, to do with as He knows best? Are we willing, with God's help, to accept His will for our children, whatever it may be? Are we teaching our children to center their lives around their heavenly Father and His business? God wants us to give our children to Him.

After Hannah and her husband gave their son, Samuel, to the Lord in the temple, Samuel served under Eli the priest. Eli was not a good father to his own sons. He was an indulgent parent who was very lax in discipline. The sad result, as we're told, was that *"Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord"* (1 Sam. 2:12).

In our Scripture lesson from the sixth chapter of Ephesians we heard God tell children, *"Obey your parents..., honor your father and mother, for this is right."* Since God expects children to honor and obey their parents, that means God has placed parents in authority over their children. Parents make a mistake if they allow their children to be the boss or even allow their children to have the same authority they do. Our children need us parents to take our God-given role and lead and guide them and teach them and be the positive authority figures in their young lives. God says further in Ephesians six that He makes us fathers the head of our families, the parent He holds primarily responsible for our children's spiritual upbringing: *"Fathers, ... bring up (your children) in the training and instruction of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). Our families need us fathers to step forward and take the responsibility of headship which God has given us.

It's not easy to be a good parent. A man once published a brochure listing ten points on raising children. He later got married and reduced his ten points to five points. When he started having children of his own he withdrew his brochure from publication altogether. We parents don't have all the answers. Thankfully, God in His Word does. Take comfort, parents, we're not alone. Take time to pray together and together to turn to God's Word. That is how God leads us and guides us in raising our children. Teach your children to know and love their Savior, Jesus Christ, who loves them and gave His life for them on the cross. Teach them to know the Bible well, to respect all of the Bible as the Word of God, and to be faithful to all of its teachings. Honor Christ in your homes. Talk to your children about God's Word as it applies in the different things that come up in their lives.

We want our children to be healthy, to have a good education, and to develop their talents through music, sports, and other pursuits. We want the best for our children, so let's give them the best. Let's give them to God. Jesus has told us, *"Let the ... children come to Me"* (Lk. 18:16). Jesus and His Word are *"the one thing that is truly needed, which shall not be taken away from (us)"* (Lk. 10:42). Our children need to be raised in the habit of going to church and Sunday School and, later on, Bible Class. If we're going to church, or if we're doing something else, either way we're teaching our children by that. Where possible, come to church as a

family. Talk to your children about why we need to come and want to be come to church: to hear God's Word and worship Him and to strengthen one another in this fellowship of like-minded believers so that our faith stays alive and healthy. We need to be nourishing our children's souls.

Martin Luther, a parent and teacher himself, said:

True it is that human wisdom and the liberal arts are noble gifts of God, good and useful for all kinds of things, wherefore one cannot do without them in this life. But they can never thoroughly tell us what sin and righteousness are in the eyes of God, how we can get rid of sins, become pious and just before God, and pass from death into life. Wisdom divine and an art supreme are required for this; and one does not find them in the books of any jurist or worldly-wise person, but in the Bible alone, which is the Holy Spirit's Book. (What Luther Says, vol. 1, p. 449, #1328).

Dr. Gresham Machen points out the danger of a purely secular education without God:

Without cultivation of the moral interests, a technically trained man is only given more power to do harm. By this purely secular, non-moral and non-religious training we produce not a real human being but a horrible Frankenstein, and we are beginning to shrink back from the product of our own hands. (ibid, footnote 7).

Hannah and her husband were willing to have their son, Samuel, serve the Lord in the temple. The Lord wanted that, too, and made Samuel a prophet who faithfully served Him. Encourage your children to consider serving the Lord as a pastor or Christian schoolteacher. Whatever our children end up doing for a living, we want to be encouraging them along the way to seek God's guidance and to live lives which glorify Him. Again Luther says:

All live on as though God gave us children for our pleasure or amusement, as though what they learn or how they live were no concern of ours. Educating or training is the command of the Supreme Majesty, who will strictly call us to account and punish us for its neglect. The need to be seriously concerned about young people is so great. For if we want to have good and capable persons for both temporal and spiritual leadership, we must certainly spare no diligence, effort, or cost in teaching and educating our children that they may be able to serve God and the world. We must think not only how we may amass money and possessions for them; for God can surely support them and make them rich without us, as He is doing every day. But He has given and entrusted children to us that we should train and govern them according to His will; otherwise He would have no need of father and mother. Let everyone know, therefore, that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children above all things in the fear and knowledge of God and ... to let them learn and study so that they may be of service wherever they are needed. If this advice were put into practice, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to bring up the sort of people who might benefit the country and its inhabitants, likewise well-trained citizens, chaste and domestic women, who in turn might rear godly children. Now think for yourself what deadly damage you are doing if you are negligent in this respect and fail on your part to train your child to usefulness and piety. (Ibid., pp. 140-141, #413)

We parents and children are far from perfect. Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world, parents and children included. Jesus loves us and helps us and guides us and blesses us as His children.

Christian friends, **GIVE YOUR CHILDREN TO THE LORD.** Remember the story of Hannah and her little boy Samuel. What greater blessing can we ask for our children than that they be devoted to Jesus, their Savior, all their lives, and finally live with Him in heaven forever? Amen.