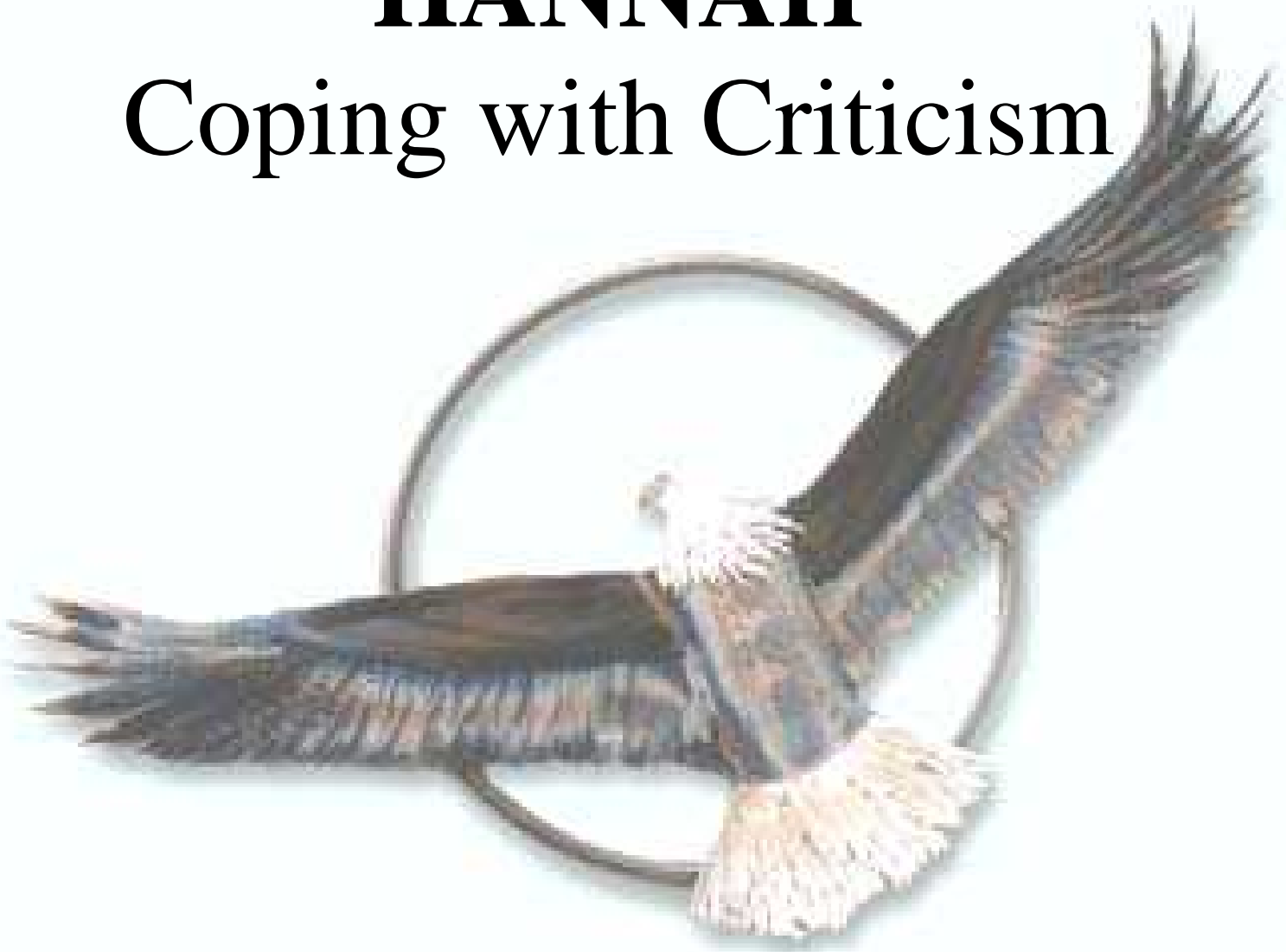


With wings *of an eagle*

Part 1 of 12

HANNAH

Coping with Criticism



Full credit given to: To Run and Not Grow Tired: By Fran Sciacca.
Navpress – Navigators 1991

Ps Roger Spackman
May 2008

God wants to bless you this morning!

God loves you so much, that He would rather *die* than live without you!

God is on your side – and if God be for me – then who can be against me!

For all of us today, we are going to have our ‘faith tanks’ filled up as we meditate, discuss and focus our thoughts and lives upon the Bible – the Word of God!

The Bible promises us that: Our faith to trust and obey God is increased as we listen to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God! Romans 10:20.

Isn't that fantastic!

You will leave this place with more faith than you came in with!

God Himself – the Creator and Comforter of the universe wants to speak to you this morning, to encourage you, to come alongside you – and whisper words of *comfort* and peace!

God wants you to have life – and life abundant! John 10:10

For God loved *you* so much, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that if *you* should believe in Him, *you* will not perish, but have everlasting life! John 3:16

You see – can you feel your ‘faith tanks’ filling up already!

That’s because our souls and spirits were designed to be nurtured and fed by the encouragement of the Word of God.

The Bible calls God the ‘God of all encouragement’!

Sometimes we need to understand that *our* perspective and understanding, our *image* of God is a little distorted.

That God is a God of love and mercy, compassion and kindness.

God is *pleased* with you this morning.

Not because of what you have or haven’t done.

But because when God looks at you and me, He sees us through the filter, the reflection, the Blood of His beloved Son – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s open God’s Word and allow the Spirit of God to nurture and encourage us *further* today:

Over the course of this series, we are going to look at the lives of 12 Bible characters and learn from them as they faced the hardships of everyday life – of the *same* issues most, if not all of us face at one time or another.

Today we will look at:
Hannah - *coping with criticism.*

Slide # 02 (With Title and Eagle)

The abiding principle for today – is that: The best way to deal with verbal abuse and harsh criticism from others – is to talk about it with God.

Slide # 03 (With Title, Eagle and Slide # 02)

The insight we can gain from today – is that: How we respond to criticism and insults – is a good indication of our emotional and spiritual maturity.

We all know that childhood chant :- Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words will never harm me!

But you know, it's sometimes difficult to say which hurts more:- physical or verbal abuse.

At least if someone hits you, your body responds by bleeding, swelling or bruising.

There's at least some evidence and proof that you've been truly hurt.

But words leave *no* such obvious indication of injury.



In fact, the real damage done by harsh words often shows up – long after they were actually said.

This painful process is accentuated when the verbal assaults are *regular* and *continual*.

It is more than discouraging to have to face someone on a day-by-day basis – who makes it a religious duty to be verbally harsh, critical and hurtful.

Husbands or wives, sons or daughters, workmates or employers, friends or enemies, neighbours or relatives.

It truly is *abuse*.

Such was the case with our Biblical character – Hannah.

She was the barren wife of a man named Elkanah.

Unfortunately Hannah, Elkanah had another wife – Peninnah.

(Now without going too deep and sidetracking – we need to know that the reason why there are many examples of things in the Old Testament that are considered *sinful* or *wrong* in the New Testament or today – that is because religion, even Christianity – is never devoid of its surrounding cultural and moral environment. Scripture is history, a journey of His-story – God’s journey with humanity, and our journey of discovery of *who* – and *what* God is really like.)

So – Scripture says, and accepts that Elkanah had two wives.

And as 1st Corinthians in the New Testament says, ‘Those of you who are married – *will* have difficulties in this life!’

The problem with Peninnah, is that unlike Hannah who couldn’t conceive, Peninnah was as fertile as the Jordan Valley!!!

It would have been hard enough for Hannah to share her husband in a home where the sound of happy children was a constant reminder of her childlessness.

But worse than that – poor Hannah had to put up with the constant harassment from *her rival* Peninnah.

The Bible says that Peninnah provoked Hannah, until Hannah ‘wept and could not eat’.

Instead of the family home being a place of dignity, safety and comfort – Hannah’s was one of torment and humiliation.

And yet – her godly way of handling that constant verbal onslaught stands as a sterling reminder that knowing God can make all the difference *in the world* – in the face of life’s criticism and humiliation.

Let’s open the word of God and read together :-

1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah
2 He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.



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.

6 And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

Just a note on this last verse: Was God the one responsible for Hannah's barrenness? You see, you need to understand that the culture of the day in which 1 Samuel was written, was a very superstitious one, even for those who followed Yahweh the Christian God.

For everything that happened, they would respond, 'It must be the will of the gods!'

Not understanding about the gift of sovereignty, free-will or the fallen nature of all creation – they would credit God with everything that happened – good or bad – even if it was just a natural outworking of free will or our fallen world.

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?"

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."

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."

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 favour 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 worshipped 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."

21 When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfil 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."

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.

24 After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh.

25 When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli,
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 shall be given over to the LORD." And he worshipped the LORD there.

1 ¶ Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my hope is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.

2 "There is no-one holy like the LORD; there is no-one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

3 "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.

4 "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

5 Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.

6 "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.

7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world.

9 He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails;

10 those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the plans of his anointed."

Slide # 09

6. Let's look at Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 2:1-10. Can you tell me the statements that refer to God's character and ultimate justice.

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Slide # 10

Let's summarise what God's Word has taught us today

Any person whose condition is described with the *words bitterness of soul, misery or great anguish and grief* is not just experiencing a bad day on the job!

Hannah was wounded and crushed by the continual harassment of people *in her own home*.

Her husband added insult to injury by not restraining the woman who attacked her daily.

Elkanah offered Hannah gifts and sought to take her mind off her pain rather than talking sensitively and openly about it.

Slide # 16

Scripture memory verses:

Dealing with criticism:

1 Peter 2:23

When they hurled their insults at Jesus, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Speaking constructively:

Ephesians 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Let's pray together and ask The Spirit of God – the Comforter and Counsellor – to strengthen and encourage our hearts and lives today.

Amen.