

# THE STORY

## Men's Bible Study

### Chapter 10 A Study in Contrasts

#### Contrast #1: Hannah and Peninnah

TRUTH: \_\_\_\_\_

##### Peninnah

- Faithless and disobedient
- Provoked and irritated Hannah because of her empty womb.
- Peninnah had a full house, but an empty heart.
- Her husband loved Hannah more than her.
- None of Peninnah's children were notable.
- Instead of responding to God with gratitude for her children, she acted hatefully and created a rivalry.

##### Hannah

- Poured her heart out in prayer to the LORD, trusting in His mercy.
- Never retaliated against her rival.
- Vowed she would give her son to serve the LORD if He provided.
- God answered her prayer and gave her five more children after Samuel.
- She made good on her vow through obedience (annual robes.)
- Received the favor of her husband.

#### Lessons

1. God \_\_\_\_\_ of his children.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_ – take inventory wisely.
3. Our actions toward others reveal our \_\_\_\_\_.

*Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'* Matthew 25:37-40

4. \_\_\_\_\_ also reveal the true nature of the heart.

*A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.* James 3:6

## Contrast #2: Eli and Samuel

TRUTH: \_\_\_\_\_

### Eli

- Did not lead his family well
- “The word of God was rare in those days”
- His blindness indicative of his leadership of Israel & his family
- Failed to turn Israel to God in a time of battle
- Lost the Ark the 2<sup>nd</sup> time around
- Fell from a place of honor to disgrace.

### Samuel

- A child conceived by grace.
- God “let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground.”
- “All Israel recognized that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord.”
- Spoke the truth to power as a boy.
- Won the battle with the Philistines.
- Rose from humble beginnings to a place of honor.

### Lessons

1. We will be \_\_\_\_\_ by God because of sin we know about but fail to restrain.
2. Failure to \_\_\_\_\_ the next generation is catastrophic.

*“Joshua son of Nun died at the age of 110. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”*

*The Story, p. 85*

3. God is \_\_\_\_\_ when He is used as a lucky charm or flashed as a badge.

*Don’t you see: It’s not the cut of a knife that makes a Jew. You become a Jew by who you are. It’s the mark of God on your heart, not of a knife on your skin, that makes a Jew. And recognition comes from God, not legalistic critics.*

*Romans 2:28-29*

4. Your attitude toward the \_\_\_\_\_ of God reflects your attitude toward God.

*Or don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

## Contrast #3: Saul and God

TRUTH: \_\_\_\_\_

### Saul

- Impressive in the world's eyes.
- Came from obscurity.
- "He will take..." (p.110)
- It could have worked (p.114, 115)
- Fear makes you do stupid things.
- Impetuous

### God

- Impressed with non-conformity.
- Part of the modus operandi
- God gives.
- God is not single-threaded.
- God is never late.
- Patient and faithful

### Lessons

1. Be careful \_\_\_\_\_...you may get it.
2. God can take an \_\_\_\_\_ and still use it as long as both the leadership and the people submit.
3. It's possible to rationalize disobedience with **anything**. \_\_\_\_\_  
*always trumps worship.*

*"Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized.'"* Matthew 7:21-23

4. Focusing on your \_\_\_\_\_ almost always leads to trouble.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you consider yourself full or empty? Of the right things or the wrong things?
2. What religious props have you used in the past?
3. How certain can we be of things that we can't see?

## Teaching Script

I always loved Roadrunner cartoons as a kid, mostly because of Coyote. That guy just never learned...

If you remember our study of the book of Proverbs a couple of years ago, you'll recall Solomon was forever contrasting two different kinds of people: the Wise and the Fool. You might also remember that the Hebrew sense of the word "fool" had nothing to do with IQ, but could be translated "thick-headed" – people who just never got it. People on whom experience was wasted time and time again. In other words, Coyote.

As we come to the close of the period of the Judges, four generations before Solomon, the description already applies. It was a time when "everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25) Six times God would bring reproof and punishment to Israel through lawless enemies, and then raise up a judge to deliver His people. They just never got it.

But never let it be said God doesn't have a sense of humor. Last week we saw a ray of hope: God used an outsider – a Moabite woman named Ruth to show the nation what faithfulness looked like. After everything that had happened, Israel didn't want to be called out, or special, or holy – they just wanted to be like everybody else. It took a Moabite – and a woman at that – to show what called out looks like; what purity looked like; what it means to be different and set apart.

Then he used a nobleman named Boaz to show them something more: the Upper Story. Boaz revealed a glimpse of the future Messiah, who wouldn't just redeem the land, or a family of widows, but the entire world from their sin.

Chapter 10 today starts with a woman named Hannah. She had long endured the grief of childlessness. But on top of that, she also suffered the taunts of her husband's other wife, Peninnah, who had plenty of children but was empty of compassion. She had poured out her heart in desperate prayer for a son to be dedicated to the LORD.

God gave Hannah a son, and she kept her word. She named him Samuel and took him to serve in the tabernacle under the High Priest, Eli. It didn't take God long to start speaking through Samuel when he was still a boy. God told Samuel that Eli and his sons would be judged, the sun was setting on Eli's priesthood, and Samuel was next.

And of course God's word came true. Israel fought the Philistines and lost, but comically blamed their defeat on the absence of the ark of covenant. What was really missing was their obedience and surrender. So, when they faced the Philistine army again, this time with the ark as their good luck charm, they lost both the battle and the ark.

Samuel then took Eli's place, but what Israel really wanted was a king. Why?? Because everyone else had one! What Israel didn't understand was that who they really rejected was God, because He should be King. God warned that their demand for a king would be costly and that he would exploit them to the point of slavery. But like a child with their

heart set on a pair of boots or a letter jacket that would ensure their acceptance by the “in” crowd, they ignored His warnings and still insisted on having an earthly king to fight their battles.

So you know what God did? He gave them what they wanted – except this was a king who was just a little too pretty and way too cocky for his own good. Saul was anointed by Samuel and began well. He was affirmed by miraculous signs from God. He fought the Ammonites and gave God credit for their victory.

But Saul’s honeymoon was short-lived, because of course God was right. Choosing a human being as your king, however dashing he might be, over YHWH Himself is a recipe for disappointment. During another battle with the Philistines, Saul got nervous because Samuel was late. So Saul took his authority too far and took the offerings into his own hands, violating the role God had reserved for the priests. When Samuel showed up, Saul backpedaled, made excuses, and tried to justify his sin, but it was too late. Saul’s path of half-hearted obedience and fear-based leadership grew more twisted with every step. And when he spared Agag and the best livestock of the Amalekites, it was “game over.”

God was trying to get His people to see that monarchy is no better than anarchy when the leader is not submitted to God.

As The Story moves to Chapter 10, I believe we can read this chapter as a study in contrasts. God isn’t just telling the story of a nation, but three stories...three contrasts, three vignettes. Just like the Wise and Foolish in Proverbs, Chapter 10 lays two characters side by side as God illuminates for us the difference between faith and unbelief, between good leadership and bad, between emptiness and fullness.

So let’s examine these three scenarios, and how God clearly distinguishes the godless from the godly in these men and women.

## Contrast #1: Hannah and Peninnah

TRUTH: *Your actions reveal your heart.*

### Peninnah

- Faithless and disobedient
- Provoked and irritated Hannah because of her empty womb.
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- Received the favor of her husband.

### Lessons

1. **God hears the prayers of his children.** Some of you are fervently praying for.... Let me assure you...
2. Peninnah was **full but empty**; Hannah was **empty but full** – take inventory wisely. Reminds me of the parable of the rich fool... “rich toward God.”
3. **Our actions toward others reveal our attitude toward God.** Peninnah was vindictive and punitive, and there was no good reason.

*Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’* Matthew 25:37-40

4. **Words also reveal the true nature of the heart.**

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.* Matthew 15:19

We can learn much by observing the contrast between these two women.

## Contrast #2: Eli and Samuel

TRUTH: *True leadership is anointed.*

### Eli

- Did not lead his family well
- “The word of God was rare in those days”
- His blindness indicative of his leadership of Israel & his family
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*[Luke 14 example of last bullets]*

## Lessons

1. **We will be judged by God because of sin we know about but fail to restrain** – this is one of the burdens of leadership. The sons were abusing their priestly role by take the best sacrifices for themselves, and fornicating with women in the tabernacle. (1 Sam. 2:17, 22)
2. **Failure to pastor the next generation is catastrophic.** We saw this two weeks ago at the beginning of the Judges...

*Joshua son of Nun died at the age of 110. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.*

*The Story, p. 85*

Chronic amnesia and a refusal to teach the Word of God will absolutely reduce the Church to irrelevance in a generation. I’d imagine Eli was very familiar with the passage in Deuteronomy 6 that says, “teach them diligently to your children, when you sit in the house or walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up...” Failure to capitalize on the daily teachable moments with your kids leads to this Scripture: the church’s irrelevance in one generation.

3. **God is mocked when He is used as a lucky charm or flashed as a badge.**

Israel lost the first battle with the Philistines because they failed to inquire of God. They lost the second one because they still failed to inquire, and then misused the symbols of the presence of God as a rabbit's foot. This is NOT anointed leadership.

The Bible is littered with examples of people who used their religiosity to flash around and impress people. I think of the Romans in Romans 2: "As Jews, we have the law! We've been circumcised! We have our religious credentials! Look at our heritage!"

The Roman Christians were bragging on their circumcision, much like Israel was flashing around the ark of the covenant. Paul said:

*Don't you see: It's not the cut of a knife that makes a Jew. You become a Jew by who you are. It's the mark of God on your heart, not of a knife on your skin, that makes a Jew. And recognition comes from God, not legalistic critics.*

Romans 2:28-29

#### **4. Your attitude toward the representation of God reflects your attitude toward God.**

I had a friend once who decided he'd put an ichthus, or one of those fish symbols on the back of his car. He decided he needed some sort of visible witness on his car. My question back to him was, "What about not driving like a bat out of hell?" He was an absolute maniac on the road. I said, "Don't you think your witness for Christ might be more effective if you didn't worry so much about figurines and more about the anger that makes you drive recklessly?"

What about your treatments of the representations of God? Some think that Christianity is displayed by a cross or an open Bible. But since the ark was the symbol of the presence of God, a better modern-day equivalent might be your body. Because the Holy Spirit lives in you as a believer, how well do you care for the temple?

*Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Why? Because YOU are the dwelling place.

Our second contrast was between priests; the final contrast is between kings...

## Contrast #3: Saul and God

TRUTH: *The certainty of things we cannot see.*

*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

### Saul

- Impressive in the world's eyes.
- Came from obscurity.
- "He will take..." (p.110)
- It could have worked (p.114, 115)
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- Impetuous

### God

- Impressed with non-conformity.
- Part of the modus operandi
- God gives.
- God is not single-threaded.
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## Lessons

1. Be careful *what you ask for*...you may get it.
2. God can take an *unwise decision* and still use it as long as both the leadership and the people submit.
3. It's possible to rationalize disobedience with *anything* – even worship. *Obedience always trumps worship.*

"But I was going to use those animals as sacrifices..."

*"Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized.'*

Matthew 7:21-23

4. Focusing on your *circumstances* almost always leads to trouble.

*The Story* p.115

Like Saul, people often underestimate their enemy, hide in caves and among the rocks, they quake with fear, and see no relief in sight. Saul, as an ungodly leader, allowed his people to focus on their circumstances instead of on God's promises. When Samuel arrived and asked what in the world was going on, listen to Saul's response:

“When I saw the men were scattering, that you didn’t come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling...” When I focused on the circumstances, and started adding things up, and you didn’t show...I felt compelled....

The greatest barrier to great leadership is allowing *feelings* to overtake *facts*. Saul felt afraid, but the fact was that God had always come through.

Now, look at the thread that weaves throughout these three vignettes:

- Hannah and Penninah show how we treat others reflects our attitude toward God.
- Eli and Samuel illustrate that our use of props reflects our attitude toward God.
- Saul shows us our rationalizations reflect our attitude toward God.

The common denominator: Whatever you’re doing at the moment: driving your car, making a sale, talking with your kids, avoiding your kids, talking about someone else... Whatever you’re doing at any given moment, you’re telegraphing two things: the *condition of your heart*, and your *personal theology*. God shows us in these three vignettes that you are more transparent than you think. Because the true condition of your heart is on public display every day, flashing like a neon sign.

And your personal theology – whether you treat God as a Deity that can be bought off or as the God of the universe – is WAY more obvious than you think. Francis Schaeffer once said: “Idolatry is thinking thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.”

This week may we treat others as if we’re interacting with Jesus Himself – because we are. May we focus less on our religious symbols and more on the Holy Spirit that lives within us. May we honor that Spirit within by worshipping authentically.

These lower stories of Chapter 10 point to the great message of the Upper Story of God: that as tall and handsome as you are, as talented as you are, as much of an anointed leader you are, no earthly king will be righteous enough to keep this chosen nation holy. A God-man will be required to lead us from sin, to make our worship more than just empty gestures, to show us how to treat our fellow man, to defeat our rationalizations and excuses, and to win the final battle against our common enemy. Once again, everything points to Jesus, in the great pursuit and redemption of the world.

*[prayer]*

*Remind us that we are billboards of one kind or another. Remind us our treatment of both the poor and the powerful speaks volumes about the condition of our hearts. Remind us that true worship is authentic. Help us revere You, in Your proper place.*

*Fill your temples with your Spirit.*