

now the judge for all of tribes of Israel. Oh, yes, one other blessing. Hannah has given birth to three other sons and two daughters. I am a father and we have an incredible family.

My fellow men. We can learn much from our wives about faith and love and service. But we will need to learn to be humble and willing to submit to them as equals before God. I often wonder what I would have lost if I had not married Hannah and had not approved her vow. What would have happened if I had not been willing to learn from my wife about faith and obedience?

Week One Read Ephesians 5:21, 25-33; Co 3:18-19. How does loving your wife relate to the idea of submission? How does one submit to their wife? What is the goal of submitting or loving your wife?

Week Two Read Proverbs 31. What is the role of a husband in making it possible for his wife to have a noble character and be able to accomplish any of the activities listed in this passage?

Week Three Read 1 Pe 3:7; Ge 2:23-24. Your wife is to be one flesh with you. What do you do in your life that reveals that she is truly your wife and has an equal part in your marriage and life.

Week four – Read two of the stories below and see how God blessed their marriage. Do you see your wife as a source of blessing in your marriage?

Sarah-Abraham = Isaac Ge 17:15-19
Ge 25:21-23

Rachel-Jacob = Joseph Ge 30:22-24
Ju 13:1-25

Hannah-Penina = Samuel 1 Sa 1; 2:18-21
Mt 1:16-22

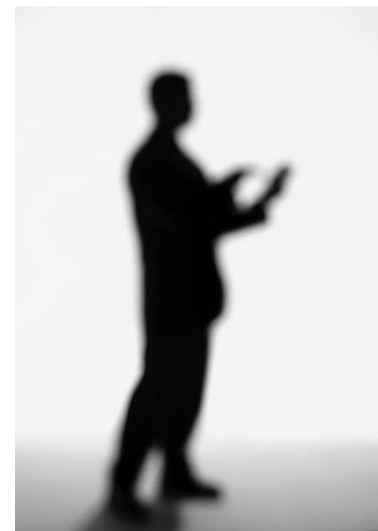
Elizabeth-Zechariah = John Lucas 1:31-66

Rebecca-Isaac = Jacob

Wife-Manoah = Samson

Mary-Joseph = Jesus

Ordinary Men



Studies in becoming a man of valor

Study 06
Elkanah

Ordinary Men Elkanah's diary

I remember the morning my wife reminded me of a promise she had made to God and the fact that I had not opposed her vow. She then asked me if she still would be allowed to fulfill that vow. I responded as most men would, wondering why she had brought it up again. It had been maybe six months since we had had the discussion.

The day she first told me her vow, as I remember, was a strange day. We had made our usual trip to Shiloh to present our sacrifices to the Lord. She was really unhappy that morning. Nothing I did seemed to cheer her up or make a difference; it only made the situation worse and increased her frustration. So I gave up. She turned and headed for the tabernacle. I assumed that she needed to be alone and pray; something she did when she was frustrated.

When she came back to our tent to prepare our evening meal she had changed. She was calm and, well, joyful. I asked what had happened and that was when she shared her vow with me and asked for my approval. You see, in our culture a woman cannot make a vow, or enter into a contract or agreement, without the approval of her husband.

What she asked me to approve was amazing. She had vowed that if God allowed her to have a son she would consecrate him to God when he was born. The words took my breath away and it was some time before I could respond. You see, she had not been able to have children and this fact has caused a great deal of tension in our marriage. So to willingly give up her first born child both shocked and amazed me.

Once I had recovered sufficiently I told her that I needed some time to think about what she had just asked me to do. This vow would affect me as well because she was talking about our future son. It would impact my life. Yet, I am ashamed to say, that was not the main focus of my thoughts. Actually I thought, "Why not? She will never have a son anyway." It had become painfully clear that she was barren. So approving her vow would not be a problem and would likely bring a respite from the tension. So I agreed and life was much more peaceful in our house.

The next few months were great. She was happy; there were no fights about her barrenness, no questions of my love for her. Things were go-

ing well. So when she reminded me of the vow I wondered why she was bringing up it again. And then it hit me. We men can be such dopes. It had been several months since her last period. She was pregnant. The impossible had happened.

Then came the second shockwave. I had agreed to give away our first-born child. You see in our belief, to consecrate a child to God means to give him to God. It is not just a promise to raise him correctly but to place him in God's service, not at home but at the tabernacle of God, which is in Shiloh, several days travel from us. This is the ultimate gift, the ultimate expression of our faith and confidence in God. It is a vow that cannot be broken without serious consequences. The only way out was to pay a very large sum of money called a redemption payment. This was money we did not have, then or now.

At first I was angry. I shouted my frustration at anyone and everyone. Many thought my anger was directed at my wife; and for a while it was. But, slowly, I began to realize that I was the real cause of my frustration. My wife had more faith than I and that made me angry. I was being humiliated, not by her but by my own failure in this matter. My wife had prayed and God had answered. I was about to be doubly blessed, but it wasn't because of my choices or my faith.

I had supported her vow, but for the wrong reasons. I had been selfish. I had thought little of my wife. You know what I mean. She is a woman and I am a man. I thought that if God was going to speak to anyone it should be me. If God wanted something done he should ask me and I would tell my wife what to do, not the other way around. But, I, a man, had to submit to my wife and the vow she had made in faith to God. That day I made a critical decision. A humbling decision. I swallowed my pride and chose to maintain my approval of her vow and learn about faith from my wife.

A lot has happened since those two events. One of the most difficult times was the day we left Samuel at the tabernacle. He was only three. My heart wanted to break over the pain, but at the same time, shout for joy about what God was doing.

I was losing my son, but he would be serving God. This had never happened before and maybe never would again. That act of faith has brought Hannah and me closer together and has brought other blessings as well. Our son has been chosen by God to receive his word and is