

Preparing Yourself for the Heart-Wrenching Decision Every Parent Must Face

It started with surrender. I will never forget when the Lord asked me to surrender.

It was at one of the first few women's retreats I had ever hosted. I had just finished speaking to the ladies, and we were having a simple time of prayer. We were all spread out over a cabin gathering room crying out to God, and in that time of prayer, I experienced one of the few open visions I have ever had in my life. For a moment, I wasn't at the retreat on the cabin floor. For just a moment the Lord took me somewhere else.

As I opened my eyes from prayer, I didn't see the planks of hard wood anymore, but I saw a pathway of dirt and sand, like an unpaved road. I could see my feet moving, and as each foot moved into the range of my eyesight, I could see my feet had sandals on them. They were simple, leather-sewn sandals. The sun was hot, and the vision was so real I could feel it.

"Where are we going?" I asked the Lord in my heart. I got no response, so I just kept walking.

After a few moments of travel, I saw before me stone steps. It was so strange. I could only see one step at a time. My scope could not take in the whole scene at once. That is very significant to what the Lord was trying to tell me on this journey. I am a big-picture person, but the Lord was choosing to limit my vision and perspective to one step at a time. Had I seen the whole picture, I may have stopped walking forward and run in the other direction. I was just moving forward at His leading with no clue to where I was going.

As I came to the stone steps, my feet stopped moving forward, and I stood in a moment of awkward silence. Then the Lord finally spoke to me.

"Put him down," the Lord said, "and leave him here with me."

In one flood of intense emotions what had been hidden from my understanding was now revealed. This journey that was so mysterious suddenly unfolded before me.

I was standing at the entrance of the temple. It was as if I were standing as Hannah, but it was my son Jeremiah He was asking for rather than Samuel. He wanted me to take him to the temple and leave him there. Never had this Bible story been so real to me; I felt I was living out 1 Samuel 1, and I could feel Hannah's heart for the first time. I realized in that moment the great sacrifice she made in giving her young son to the Lord and how heart-wrenching that act of obedience must have been. When she placed her son in Eli's arms and then turned to walk away, there wasn't a car to hop into and drive away to drown out the cries of her baby.

Just as I had to walk slowly to the temple, I realized that I would have to turn and intentionally walk away, thinking every step about what I had just done, hearing the voice of my little one the entire time.

I didn't just cry. I ugly cried. I asked the Lord why.

He said, "I have need of you, and I have need of him. You can clothe him, but you can't control him."

Somehow I understood in that moment what the Lord meant. Although I would later study the story to understand the depth of what He was saying to me, I knew I had been trying to control my son. My identity was wrapped up in being his mother, and I was obsessed with raising him perfectly. I had my own dreams for him and my own plans. I didn't let him breathe without my knowing it. He didn't even go to the

nursery or Sunday school at church because I kept him continually by my side.

None of this was evil, but it was definitely getting in God's way. God gave him to me for me to be a steward of his life, not to be his god or to determine his future. I had to release him, even if it seemed he was too young and even if it hurt. Hannah must have felt pain; she may have even thought at times that what she was doing was crazy. I am sure the other mothers talked about her as if she were a terrible mom who just abandoned her son. But God never asked her to abandon him. He just asked her to release Samuel to Him. {eo}

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