

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How to be a Godly Mother

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1-2

Code: 1279

Look with me, if you will, in the Old Testament to the book of 1 Samuel and I want to share with you what I see to be here a profile of a godly mother named Hannah. I think it's been at least three or four years ago that I taught a special message on this particular woman in a Sunday-morning service on a Mother's Day and the message had such great impact that as I was thinking about it and talking with my wife, Patricia, about it, we both agreed that it would be well if could refresh our minds regarding this very, very lovely and special person Hannah for she presents to us the pattern of a godly mother. And we're not going to take the time to develop all that's potentially here in the text, but at least to touch the surface of some very, very important things.

Obviously I'm very concerned about what's happening to the American family today. As I shared with you some months ago in our study in Ephesians, it's shocking to me to think that only seven percent...that's seven percent...of the people of the United States live in a traditional family with a breadwinner father and a homemaker mother. And it's really shocking.

Just recently the White House Conference on the Family changed its name. They changed the name to the White House Conference on the Families because they didn't want anybody to assume that they thought there was only one kind of family with a male father and a female mother. Shocking.

I mentioned this morning that I spent the week with Dr. Basil Jackson and I did, he's a psychiatrist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and he said this to me, he said, "A child will never come to full psychological development and maturation in adulthood unless that child has had a mother in the home." That's a pretty strong statement for a psychiatrist to make. It's utterly essential to the life of a child that it have a mother in the home, that there be a right perspective in the home.

But we know the home is falling apart. A recent article along the line of what's happening with weddings says, "In many weddings 'so long as we both shall live' has been replaced by 'so long as we both shall love.' Many couples feel that the latter statement is more realistic." Says an Episcopalian minister from Akron, Ohio, "Kids 19, 20, 21 are not willing to make the commitment 'until death do us part.' They're not thinking about their silver or golden anniversary. What they want to be doing now is more important to them than what's going to happen forty years from now and so they want to substitute 'as long as we both shall love.'"

People are going into marriage anticipating that they're going to want to get out. Parents have shirked the responsibility of the home. Last month in the Rochester Times Union Newspaper there was this article: "When the winter...when the victims of the winter are finally identified the list will go far beyond the owners of ski resorts, salt spreaders and snow plows. Somewhere near the top will be working mothers and their children, especially their children. Mothers and some fathers who have jobs or inflexible commitments outside the home have faced the quandary, almost a panic, about what to do when their children get sick. Inflation has parents talking survival and they maintain that their children will just have to understand that their jobs come first, even if the child is ill. It's really a problem, one mother admitted to me, my job is important to me and the family has gotten used to the extra income. My husband has a very high power job and I can't expect him to take time off, but I can't either. I am competing with people who don't have the same responsibility and so I hate to say it, but more often than not I send the kids off to school even if they are sick.

"The number of sick children in school has created anxiety. The mother gets anxious at work if their child is ill at school or at home alone and they feel anxious when they stay home because they worry about the job. If they take their sick days for the benefit of their sick children, then they have to go to work when they get sick. From the child's perspective the choice is no better, either he drags through the day at school sick, or faces the loneliness at home."

The suggestion of the article is, "That we could have a Baby-Sitting Bank managed by an agency such as a charity or a church. It would consist of men and women available for sitting with children in such an emergency like substitute teachers."

Now this has become such a problem in one school that they have sent a letter home defining the symptoms that are unacceptable in the classroom. The message is loud and clear, schools don't want children to come in if they belong in bed. But what is happening to the children who must stay home? Apparently more and more parents are leaving their sick elementary school children home unattended. "I personally know," says the writer, "of eight, nine and ten-year-olds and have heard of some as young as seven, who are left at home alone until 3:30 or 4 when a baby sitter arrives or an older brother or sister comes home from school. For the major part of the day these children are quite literally nursing themselves back to health all alone." "You probably think it's terrible," a recent divorcee told me with a shrug, "but I have no choice but to leave my son home by himself, I can't get any help. I did stay home a couple of days and people at work were quite understanding but now I sense my boss's patience is running out and I just can't jeopardize my job."

"The women I talk with are not happy about these arrangements. They tell me they feel anxious." I hope so. And then the suggestion comes that what we need to do is get a "rent-a-granny, rent-a-nanny, rent-a-parent...whatever you want to call it, and a mother with a sick child can call a central number, describe her problem and for a fee they would send out a rent-a-granny. "It would certainly not benefit...rather, it would certainly benefit not only the contagious classroom, but the sick child who

needs warm, reassuring company."

Who's under the illusion that somebody called a "rent-a-granny" is going to give warm, reassuring company? But it points up the fact that we are facing an incredible time in our society when children are fast moving down the priority list. This is the curse of our society and with a White House conference on the family coming up, there's going to be another devastating blow at the family. They're filling up the conference attendees with homosexuals just by the boat load, incredible numbers of them, advocating the...that the real family is not the only kind of family that families can be any kinds of people who choose to live in a house in any kind of way. It's a tragic and sad thing.

I really don't know what the answer is for the world. I don't think there is one. But for the church it's certainly a reaffirmation of what the family is to be. But in the world an ancient Greek by the name of Demosthenes had an interesting idea. He suggested that whenever a child made a mistake in school, one of the parents be spanked. Maybe that's a good suggestion.

It's a sad day in which we live. One out of twelve children is a battered child. One writer said, "No nation is ever greater than its mothers, for they are the makers of men." The rabbis used to teach, "God can't be everywhere at the same time so He made mothers." They have a very special place in society, very high priority. The Bible exalts motherhood. The Bible says that women are saved in childbearing. and I really chafe today when I hear people advocating that people not have babies, especially Christian people, because I believe babies are an heritage from the Lord and I believe that women are saved in childbearing. That's a great and high and holy calling from God. The Bible exalts motherhood, Sarah, Rachel, Jochebed, Deborah, Ruth, Elizabeth and Mary. Motherhood is a great and wonderful thing.

But for tonight, just very briefly, I want us to look at one mother by the name of Hannah in 1 Samuel. You know, we think we live in a tough time today and in many ways we do. But the time we live in today is no tougher than the time in which Hannah lived. It was the period of the judges in Israel. And the situation in Israel was extremely difficult. Samson had died and with the death of Samson there was no great leader in the land. And the land was in a state of fluctuation and turmoil and confusion. And there was a desperate need for a great leader in the chaos and the sinfulness of that day.

And I say again, it was a day that was perhaps the parallel of our day, but even worse. The Philistines, who were the arch-enemies of the Israelites, were gaining ground. The priesthood that was supposed to lead the people of God had become totally corrupted. There were vile and sinful men in the priesthood. Even in the temple itself there were moral scandals so that the children of the high priest himself were carrying on sexual orgies at the foot of the temple steps. It was a wretched time, a time of gross evil, a time when not only was the leadership gone but the priesthood had abandoned its calling. The nation was weak. The nation was impotent. And the nation additionally

had limited prophetic voice, there were no great preachers. It was a time of a tremendous slide away from the divine standard. And so it was a time when God needed a special man and in order to make a special man you need a special woman and Hannah was that woman.

Verse 1 of 1 Samuel chapter 2, "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy like the Lord for there is none beside Thee, neither is any rock like our God."

Now that's the best way I know to introduce you to Hannah. Hannah was a special lady who really knew God. She had a divine perspective. And I think chapter 2 and the first couple of verses really opens up our understanding to what kind of a woman this was.

Now let's back up and meet some of the details in chapter 1 verse 1. "There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of Mount Ephraim and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: and he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children."

Now we meet a family, strange one at that, two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, Hannah did not and Elkanah who was a Levite was her husband. And if he was a Levite it means that he was at least in the priestly family.

Now this particular woman becomes the mother that we want to concentrate on, not Peninnah, but Hannah. And she demonstrates for us, and we're just going to look at them briefly, three aspects that are necessary for a godly mother, three things that are mandatory for a godly mother. Number one, a right relationship to her husband...a right relationship to her husband and we're going to see that beginning in verse 3.

First of all, she shared with her husband in worship. Did you get that? That's the first thing. There are several points in a right relationship to her husband. The first one, she shared with him in worship. Verse 3, "And this man, Elkanah, went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh...where the ark was...and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord were there."

Now Hannah had a believing worshiping husband. He worshiped God faithfully. He went up at least each year, and by the way, pilgrimage to Shiloh was supposed to be three times yearly, according to Exodus 23 and the text does not preclude the fact that he did that, that when it says he went up yearly, it meant he went up each year the number of times that were prescribed. He was a faithful, worshiping man. She had a right relationship to her husband in that she was a part of his worship.

Now I really believe, people, that godly fathers make for better mothers. Do you believe that? Since woman is a responder to man, and man is to be the head of the family, a godly father makes a better mother of his wife. And when Elkanah expressed his worship, she was there. Verse 7, "And as he did so year by year when she went up to the house of the Lord," and that you can stop right there, she went with him, that's the implication of verse 7. When he went, she went.

In other words, they had a common bond of worship. I really believe for the full expression of godly motherhood there must be a shared spiritual strength in the home. It's very difficult, and some of you live in that situation where you have a partner that's an unbeliever and you know what difficulty it is to bring about the rearing of godly children in a divided house, very difficult. Hannah followed him.

Now he wasn't a perfect man, was he? He had his faults, did he not? What was one of them? He was a polygamist, I'd say that's a pretty serious one. You say, "Well does the Old Testament advocate polygamy?" Not at all. It was a sin, but it was culturally accepted in this early time and so it was not uncommon for this to occur, particularly when you had a wife that was barren and couldn't raise up a child. Then you would be pressed by the society around you to get another wife who could raise up a son for you which may be the case that Hannah was first and since she could not give birth to a child, he went on to marry Peninnah and Peninnah gave him children. But nonetheless, in spite of a serious imperfection in his character, they had a mutual spiritual expression of worship.

And I would just add this, ladies, and men as well, you will not find your partner to be perfect but that should not preclude the fact that you can worship the Lord together in your imperfections. Don't expect perfection. Where you find the love and the worship of the Lord, that should be sufficient, for none of us is perfect.

So, first of all, it's important to know that the right husband relationship involves a sharing in worship. Secondly, it involves a sharing of love. Marriage is not just spiritual, it is also physical and emotional and psychological. And not only did they share their worship but they shared their affection and their love. Back up to verse 4, "And when the time was that Elkanah, he gave to Peninnah, his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions" Apparently she had proliferated children for him. "But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion." Why? "For he...what?...he loved Hannah." Apparently he felt obligated to Peninnah, she had provided the children and so he gave what was right. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion. That adjective is not included in what he gave to Peninnah. So whatever the worthy portion means it was something more magnanimous than the legal restriction which he just met in the case of Peninnah and he did that because he loved Hannah, even though the Lord had shut up her womb. And, of course, Peninnah, her adversary, had provoked her relentlessly to make her fret because the Lord had shut up her womb.

You put two women in the same house, you're going to have trouble anyway. Now you put two women in the same house and have the husband love one of them, and you're going to have a lot of trouble. And if the husband happens to love the one who has no children, the one who has children will really mock the one who doesn't because that's how she'll get back at the husband. And that's what happened. And, of course, Hannah was a lovely, sensitive person and so it says, "And as he did so year by year when she went up to the house of the Lord, so Peninnah provoked her, therefore she wept and did not eat. Then said Elkanah, her husband, to her...Hannah, why weepest thou, and eatest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved and not I better to thee than ten sons?" See, he knew why she was crying, she was crying cause she couldn't have a child because he would hear Peninnah really laying that stuff on her. But he said, "Am I not enough, Hannah?"

Giving a worthy portion, or we could translate it a double portion, was usually a gesture in the East and the Orient for an honored guest, a preferred guest. Elkanah loved her in a special way and his love was her security. You know, there are some women who are very jealous, very, very jealous and they even panic over women who are not in the household. Can you imagine what it would be like for your husband to also be married to someone else who was having all his children? Now I'll tell you, a woman who could tolerate that is a woman of great grace and understanding and forgiveness. And that's the kind of woman she was.

You say, "Well what in the world ever provided her security in that situation? Why if I would find out that Charlie even winks at another women, I'll have his neck. I mean, this is ludicrous." You know what secured her in the midst of an impossible situation? She knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he...what?...loved her. They shared love.

So there was Hannah in a hard place to raise a child, in a hard place to be secure, in a divided family and yet she had a right relationship to her husband because they shared worship, and they shared love and those two things eliminated conflict. Now I don't care what the conflict around you is, there's no circumstance that is so severe that a shared love of God and a shared love of each other can't overcome it. And I get weary of people who always want to get out of their marriage. But when all of this is put together, the missing ingredient is children, she had no children. Why? Verse 5, "The Lord had shut up her womb." That was sovereign.

The first thing then about a godly woman is she has a right husband relationship. The second one, she has a right heavenly relationship...she has a right heavenly relationship. When she has a problem she doesn't lash out at her husband, when she has a problem she doesn't lash out at her adversary, Peninnah, she doesn't lash out at the children in the house, she doesn't lose her cool all around, she goes directly to whom? To the Lord.

"So Hannah rose up...verse 9...after they had eaten in Shiloh and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord." The reason he sat around all the time was

he was a huge, big, fat guy who finally fell over off his stool and broke his neck and died. He was a proverbial slob is what he was, couldn't even get up off of whatever he sat on to check on his own kids. And there he was plopped on a seat leaning on a post that held up the temple. And so she...pretty vivid, isn't it? And so she came in, you know, for some spiritual advice to see the high priest, she was bitterness of soul and I love it in verse 10, "She prayed unto the Lord and wept bitterly."

Listen, ladies, not only do you need a right heavenly, or rather a right husband relationship but a right heavenly one, too. It's needful that when you have some problem you go to the Lord with it. She vowed a vow, she said, "O Lord of hosts, O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt..." and she began to pray.

Now what do we see in this right heavenly relationship? Number one, she had a passion for God's best...she had a passion for God's best. And you know what God's best was? Children, children...the fact that she didn't have children she felt...meant that she didn't have God's best. Children are an heritage from the Lord. She says in verse 11, "If You'll just look on my affliction and remember me and not forget me," and all of that means...give me a child, give me a child, give me a child. That's why she wept, she had a passion for God's best.

You say, "Are children God's best?" Absolutely. People say, "Oh, I don't know if I want to bring a child into this world." This world is no worse than that one was for her. They are an heritage from the Lord. They are a blessing. She was not selfish. She didn't want a child so she could prove her womanhood. She didn't want a child so she could show them off to everybody. She wanted a child because she believed that a child was God's best gift. She was willing to accept the responsibility. I say curse abortions for those are God's best gift. A truly godly mother is not a reluctant mother. A truly godly mother is one with a passion for children, who sees them as a gift from God, a fulfillment of the divine intention for woman, not to indulge yourself and not to prove her womanhood but because they are God's best gift.

So she had a passion for God's best. Secondly, she was a woman of prayer. Her heavenly relationship meant she wanted the best and she prayed for it. And all of the praying runs right down to verse 12, "She continued praying before the Lord and Eli observed her mouth." He watched her. And she wasn't praying just silently, her mouth was moving all the time, she was impassioned in her prayer.

Why did she pray to God? Because she knew that Elkanah wasn't the source of children, God was. Do you hear that? Every child that ever is conceived in this world is a gift from God. That's why I say curse abortions, they take the life of that which God has granted. She prayed. She prayed constantly. Passion turned to prayer.

And then there is also here I see in verse 11, I'll call it presentation. She says, "Remember me, remember me, don't forget me, Lord." In other words, she is saying I'll vow a vow, here's my life, remember me and give me what I desire, a male child and I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life. She promised to give that child to the Lord. And by the way, Deuteronomy 30 says that any time a woman vowed to give her child to the Lord, the husband had to agree, so Elkanah must have agreed in the prayer too. She wanted presentation. She wanted to present that child to God. She was a woman with a passion for God's best. She was a woman of prayer. And she was a woman of presentation who wanted a child for one reason and that was to give that child to the Lord.

Do you feel that way about your children? The greatest desire is to give them to God? If you don't, you're operating on the wrong premises. She was a woman of purity, too. Verse 12, "She continued praying," and verse 13, "Hannah, she spoke in her heart only her lips moved too but her voice wasn't heard and so Eli thought she was drunk." "And Eli said to her, How long will you be intoxicated? Put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but have poured my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid as a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I been speaking. And Eli answered and said, Go in peace and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

She was a woman of purity. She was a woman of virtue. She was no son of Belial. She was no evildoer. She was a pure woman. She poured out her heart to the Lord and drank neither wine nor strong drink. She refrained from it all. Now she had a right heavenly relationship, a woman of prayer, a woman of passion for God's best, a woman of presentation, that is the gift she received she wanted to return, and a woman of purity. And by the way, fifthly, a woman of patience. Verse 18, "And she said, Let Thy handmaid find grace in Thy sight." She ended her prayer. "So the woman went her way and she did eat and her countenance was no more sad." Why? She believed God and she was going to be patient till she heard God's answer.

You want to know what the result was? Verse 19, beautiful, "And they rose up in the morning early and worshiped before the Lord and returned and came to their house at Ramah; and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife." "Knew" means they had relationships together. "And the Lord...what?...remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived that she bore a son and called his name Samuel." You know what Samuel means? Heard by God. "Saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord." Her prayer was answered. She wanted God's best. She prayed for it. She offered that life back to God. She lived in purity. God answered her prayer.

What was the response? Chapter 2, she was so filled with praise, she said, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy like the Lord, there is none beside Thee, neither is there any rock

like our God." And she goes on and on all the way down to verse 10 praising the Lord...just filled with praise for God.

Elizabeth did that when she heard of John the Baptist. Mary did that, didn't she, when she heard of the birth of Jesus. You know, it makes me sick to think today that people find out they're pregnant, instead of praising God for such a gift, they get upset about it.

A godly mother has a right husband relationship and a right heavenly relationship. And lastly, a right home relationship...a right home relationship. Go back to chapter 1 verse 21 and let's look at the home. Two things stand out. First of all, she was dedicated to that child. "And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow." Elkanah kept going back, going back to Shiloh, "But Hannah went not up." She didn't go anymore. "For she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child is weaned and then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever." She kept her vow, I'll give that child to the Lord as soon as he's weaned, for a Hebrew mother between two and three years of age, but she said I'm not going up there until this child is recovered so that it can feed itself.

Do you know that's putting the child as a real priority. Some people might say she put the child over worshiping the Lord. No, because she was taking care of the best gift God ever gave her, she was rendering to God the highest service possible. It was more important for that woman to stay there and nurse that child than to go offer sacrifices to God. She knew the priorities. She stayed home with the child in total dedication and commitment, training, loving, instructing and caring for that child.

Verse 23, "Elkanah, her husband," who must have been a very understanding man, "said unto her, Do what seemeth to thee good, tarry until thou hast weaned him; only the Lord established his word; so the woman abode and nursed her son till she weaned him."

First of all, she was dedicated to the child. That's the right home relationship. Mothers, invest your life in those children. Believe me, it didn't stop there. Then she dedicated the child to the Lord. She was not only dedicated to the child but dedicated the child to the Lord, verse 24, "And when she had weaned him she took him up with her with three bullocks and one ephah of flour and a skin of wine and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh; and the child was young." As I said, two or three years old. "And they slew a bullock and brought the child to Eli and she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman who stood by thee here praying unto the Lord, for this child I prayed and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him, therefore also I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshiped the Lord there."

It's a fabulous thing to think about. A woman gave her child to the Lord keeping a promise and a vow she had made to God. But that doesn't mean she didn't care anymore about the child, not on your life. She cared about that child the rest of that child's life, she never really let go at all. In fact, as

they would go back to the temple through the years, they would always go back and express their care and their love to the child.

Verse 11 of chapter 2, just pinpointing some highlights as we draw to a conclusion. "And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house and the child did minister to the Lord before Eli the priest." Verse 18, "And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod." Verse 19, "Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."

That wasn't the end of the story. The Lord never takes without giving. And so in verse 21, "The Lord visited Hannah and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters." Five kids. Maybe she got more than she bargained for. That's the way it is with God. "And Samuel grew before the Lord."

You want to know something? Eli had three sons, two sons rather, Hophni and Phinehas. Never in the entire story of Eli and these two sons is their mother's name mentioned and the results are utterly tragic. Verse 22 of chapter 2, "Now Eli was very old and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear you make the Lord's people to transgress. And they hearkened not unto the voice of their father and so the Lord said, I will slay them." And then the contrast, verse 26, "And the child Samuel grew on and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men." What a contrast.

Verse 1 of chapter 3, "And the child Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli." Again, always Samuel in the positive. Verse 19 of chapter 3, "And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and did not let His words fall to the ground and all Israel even from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

But that was Samuel. The sons of Eli, sad story. Chapter 4 verse 15, "Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were dim and he couldn't see. And the man said unto him, I am he who came out of the army and I fled today out of the army," and he said, "Where...what is there done, my son. And the messenger answered and said, Israel has fled before the Philistines and there hath been a great slaughter among the people and thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead and the ark of God has been taken. And it came to pass when he made mention of the ark of God that he fell from off the seat," still there in the same seat, leaning on the same pole, "and his neck broke and he died for he was an old man and heavy. And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child near to be delivered, and when she had heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed herself; for her pains came on her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said unto her, Fear not for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it and she named the child Ichabod, which means

the glory is departed."

Sad ending, isn't it? They all died. Never a name of a mother mentioned in the family of Eli and look at the price. But Samuel grew and ministered to the Lord. There's no price high enough to value the virtue of a godly mother. She has a right relationship to her husband, to heaven and to the home. I trust this is a good reminder for all of us. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for our time tonight, just simply to touch again this beautiful and thrilling passage, to be reminded over again of the high priority you place upon motherhood. We hear even now the echo of the voices of our precious little children, the cries of the littlest ones who stood before us tonight, the songs of the older ones who sang and who spoke. We thank You for them all. We pray that You would give us the grace and the strength to raise up a godly seed that they like Samuel might minister before you and not be like the children of Eli. And may we know that it depends upon a right relationship to husband, to heaven and to the home. Help us to make that commitment for Jesus sake. Amen.

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