

1 Samuel 1:21-28 — Dedicating Our Children To God

January 16, 2022

Good morning! I hope everyone is avoiding COVID and whatever other sicknesses are going around. There are plenty of people who are sick. Stay safe and don't lick the doorknobs.

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you.

I want to do something a little different before we launch into our study of God's Word. At CrossWinds, we are in a challenging season. We are at the end of a capital campaign. We are raising \$650,000 for some renovations here on the Spirit Lake campus plus a complete overhaul to our new Spencer facility. So far \$446,000 has come in. We need to pray that in the next two to three weeks the remaining \$200,000 shows up. In addition, we are a little stuck on our Spencer renovation plan. We submitted our blueprints to the city of Spencer for approval and have not heard back. It appears we may be stuck in bureaucratic red tape. We need to pray we either get approval or hear back from them on changes we need to make. We can't swing a hammer and move forward in the Spencer facility until those plans are approved.

In addition, last week Pastor Andy announced his resignation. He took a job at another church and will be gone by the end of the month. I have already begun looking for his replacement. Not just me but as a church family we want to pray that God brings us the right person who is the right fit with the right gifts.

In addition, you know Sarah, who was our administrative assistant in the Spirit Lake office, resigned to return to working with her former company as a

computer programmer. We miss her. Thankfully Renae Nelson is filling in and doing a great job. We will only have her for a limited amount of time because as soon as the snow melts, she will return to running the Spillway Drive-In.

Of course, there is also all the COVID, flu, and whatever other viruses going around. A lot of people are sick. Last week, I told you my father was not well. On Monday night we took him to the emergency room at the hospital. He was diagnosed with COVID. They put him on high flow oxygen and gave him IV COVID drugs. He made great progress and on Friday they let him go home to finish his recovery.

In addition, we want to be a church that doesn't lose sight of our mission of reaching people with Jesus. I taught on that in the fall, then we took a break for the holiday season. Now that we are in January, we want to get back to strategizing on how to better reach people with Jesus in our community.

With all this stuff in the air, like a quarterback reading the defense, I want to call an audible and ask we have a quick prayer meeting where we bring these issues before God in prayer asking for his help, grace, and guidance. Break into groups of approximately three. After it feels like we have had a chance to pray, I will get up and close us in prayer, then we will get back to our study.

Last week we began studying a new book of the Bible. It is the book of 1 Samuel. Last week we learned that the books of 1 and 2 Samuel in our Bible were originally one book. They were broken in half because of their length. These books contain the stories of three great leaders of Israel beginning in the year 1050 B.C. The book of 1 Samuel begins roughly 200-300 years after Israel

entered the Promised Land under Joshua. While the Israelites were supposed to be a nation ruled by God, the problem was it was a nation in which everyone did what was right in their own eyes. As a result, the people kept walking away from God and following the ways of the godless pagan people around them. When that happened, God raised up a nation to oppress them. When the Israelites suffered for their sin, they repented of their sin and called out to God to rescue them. God would hear their cry and raise up a leader called a judge to save them. There were men like Samson or Ehud. The judge God raised up would rescue the Israelites from their oppressors and save the day. It didn't take long until things were good and the Israelites began wandering away from God again and following the ways of the pagan nations around them. God sent them another nation to oppress them. They repented and God raised up a different judge to save them. This cycle repeated itself for more than 200 years.

When we come into 1 Samuel, God was changing the cycle. He was raising up three great leaders in the nation. Their stories are found in 1 and 2 Samuel. They were Samuel — who is the last judge, then King Saul, and King David.

Review — The Birth Of Samuel

Last week, we began with the first 20 verses of 1 Samuel. They tell us the story of Samuel's conception and birth. His mother was a woman named Hannah. She was married to a God-fearing man named Elkanah. Unfortunately, Hannah was not able to conceive children. To solve the problem, a frustrated Elkanah married a second wife to bear him children and carry on the family name. This woman's name was Peninnah.

This is polygamy. For you guys who think that would be a great idea, as we learned last week, every time we see polygamy in the Bible, it is not a happy family. It is not a happy home. God's plan is one man and one woman for life.

Peninnah, the second wife, was very fertile. She was able to bear children faster than Iowa farmers grow corn. She was popping out kids left and right.

While Peninnah was a very fertile woman, she was also a very wicked woman. She used her crop of children and ability to bear Elkanah offspring as an occasion to demean and degrade Hannah, who was barren. Peninnah knew that even though she was not the woman who was at the center of Elkanah's heart. That was Hannah. Peninnah knew her role was not to be deeply loved by Elkanah but to simply bear children for Elkanah. Since Peninnah could not be the woman at the center of Elkanah's heart, she made it her mission in life to torment Hannah, the woman who was the apple of Elkanah's eye.

Last week, we saw that Hannah, in her brokenness, came before the Lord at the temple and cried out to God in prayer. She told God that if he would give her a son, she would give that son back to God. That son would serve God for all of his life. God heard that prayer and enabled her to conceive the son she longed to have, the boy Samuel.

That son was more than just the answer to Hannah's affliction. No longer would Peninnah be able to shame her and ridicule her for her barrenness. Samuel was also the answer to the nation of Israel's affliction. The leaderless nation of Israel needed a strong and godly leader. That is what God provided with Samuel. He would become the next leader of the nation. He was dedicated to

God from conception. He was asked for in prayer before birth. He was the leader the nation desperately needed.

But a big question remains: Now that Hannah conceived and gave birth, would she keep her promise? Would she take the son she so desperately wanted and give him in lifelong service to God? Would she break her promise and keep young Samuel to herself at home? Would she try to adjust her promise and decide to keep young Samuel around her at home until he was old enough to make his own decisions about his future? These are the questions that hang in the air as we finish chapter 1. Let's read 1 Samuel 1:21-28 to find the answers.

The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever." Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there. 1 Samuel 1:21–28 (ESV)

Let's work our way through these verses and look at some practical applications along the way.

Elkanah and Hannah were a God-fearing couple.

The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever." 1 Samuel 1:21–22 (ESV)

We begin by learning a little more about Elkanah. It says he went up every year to sacrifice to the Lord and to pay his vow. This tells us Elkanah was regular in worship. Worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh was an annual event. He made regular plans to be there. He traveled there each year. While everyone in Israel was doing what was right in their own eyes, Elkanah was a guy that made sure he was at church to faithfully worship God, and he made sure he took his family with him to church.

Guys, Elkanah was a man who provided good leadership in his home. He didn't let the busyness of life crowd out church and worship. He made time for those things. He is a great example to learn from and to follow.

In addition, we see he made sure to pay his vows in worship. What were the vows Elkanah made in worship? We do not know. Whatever they were, what is important for us to see is that Elkanah kept his vows. He was a man of his word. He kept his promises. A vow is a promise someone makes that will involve some kind of sacrifice to keep that promise. It may be a small sacrifice or it may be a big sacrifice. It didn't matter if it involved a small or big sacrifice, Elkanah was known for keeping his word.

While we are on the topic of Elkanah being a man who kept his promises, realize that in a moment we will see that Hannah was the same way. When she made a promise to God, she kept that promise, even if it was hard. We can see Elkanah and Hannah were the original promise keepers, which means they were a good couple.

What does the Bible say about making and keeping promises?

If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. Numbers 30:2 (ESV)

If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth. Deuteronomy 23:21–23 (ESV)

Clearly, God expects his people to be men and women of their word.

God's people are to be people who keep their promises, especially those made before God.

Now you wonder, what promises do we make before God today? Let me give you some examples.

Marriage vows are a promise before God. When people come into a church for their wedding, some are just in church for the ambiance a church provides on the wedding day. Others are in church on their wedding day because it is a big enough facility so their family and friends can attend. That is not what a church wedding is about. In a church wedding, the pastor is supposed to say, "We are gathered here today with God as the greatest witness." The marriage vows are made in God's presence. They may be hard to keep or they may be easy to keep but God's people keep their promises. This is why marriage vows are for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part. Those are not just words. Those are promises made before God. God takes those promises seriously. We are to take those promises seriously.

Another example is when a political official puts his or her hand on a Bible and takes an oath of office. For many people, they consider that merely a public

formality. God takes those vows seriously. He is the greatest witness. He is the one before whom all of us will stand and before whom we will give an accounting of our lives.

Another would be when someone puts his or her hand on the Bible in court and swears "to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God." That is not a formality. That is a promise before God, and he takes those seriously.

As Elkanah was a man of his word. We are to be men and women of our word. Just as God's words are always true and he always keeps his promises, our words should always be true and we should always keep our promises.

Let's get back to our text.

Hannah taught Samuel about God when he was young.

While Elkanah went up to worship, Hannah did not go up to worship with young Samuel. She stayed home. She said that as soon as Samuel was weaned, she would take him so that he could appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever.

The word *appear* means to formally present oneself before an authority. Hannah's plan was that the first time she took Samuel to the tabernacle in Shiloh would be the time when he was old enough that she could formally present him to God and leave him at the tabernacle.

How old would Samuel have been when this happened? It helps us to know Jewish women typically breastfed their children a long time. I think it is the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees that tells us Jewish women typically breastfed

their children until age 3, some even to age 4. That seems a little late to me but that is what we know.

It was during those early years that it was a mother's job to not just nourish her children physically, but she was to nourish her children spiritually. She was to pour into her children the Word of God. As children grew, fathers were more involved in teaching the child the Word of God, but in the earliest years, this was an extremely important role the mother played in forming the spiritual foundation of a child's life.

If Hannah was going to bring young Samuel to the tabernacle and leave him to get his advanced biblical education there, she knew it was her role to give young Samuel his basic biblical education at home, and she did that until he was weaned.

This brings us to another topic we should spend a few minutes discussing before we move further. That is the important role of a mother in a child's life. Hannah desperately wanted to be a mother. When God gave her Samuel, she poured all of her mothering not just into feeding Samuel and changing his diapers but into teaching Samuel the Word of God. She poured truth into his heart not just food into his mouth.

Mothers, I cannot tell you enough how important you are. You play an incredibly powerful and formative role in the lives of your children. When you teach them Bible stories, you think they are too young to learn. That is not true. They are listening and learning. When you pray over them and with them, they are listening and learning from the window they have into your heart.

Just as Hannah had an incredibly important role to play in Samuel's life to form his heart toward following God, mothers, you also have that incredibly important role. Do not leave the education of your children just to the school. Do not leave the education of your children to videos like Sesame Street and Blues Clues. Mothers today are under incredible pressure to do everything else with their lives except love, care, and invest in their children. Mothers are constantly looking for a video babysitter so they can catch up on Instagram posts. That is not good. Ladies, love on your children. Teach them about how much God loves them and Jesus loves them. You think they are not paying attention but they are listening, absorbing, and learning.

Elkanah supported his wife and encouraged her spiritual commitments.

Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. 1 Samuel 1:23 (ESV)

Elkanah understood Hannah's motives and her desire to fulfill her vow to God. Under the law, Hannah's promise to God to give her son in lifelong service to God was not valid unless her husband affirmed her vow. Here we see Elkanah affirmed his wife and her promise. He didn't undermine it.

What does it mean when Elkanah said, "only, may the Lord establish his word." To be honest, I am not sure. There are different schools of thought. I think the bottom line is that Elkanah was affirming Hannah's vow to dedicate her son to the Lord. In other words, he said, "It is fine for you to stay home until Samuel is weaned. Just make sure that doesn't become an excuse to not keep your promise to God. You asked God for Samuel. God gave him to you. Make sure you keep your word to him."

What we see is that Samuel grew up in a home where there was spiritual unity. Not only was Hannah a godly woman, but Elkanah was a godly man who supported his wife. Remember, Samuel was not just Hannah's son, he was Elkanah's son. Samuel was the son that not just Hannah wanted but whom Elkanah wanted as well. He was the firstborn son of Elkanah's favorite wife!

Here we see the godliness of Elkanah. He supported his wife's spiritual commitments to God; he didn't undermine them. He was willing to make the sacrifices necessary to support her, even if that meant giving up their son for life!

How does this apply to us? The first thing we need to learn from this is the importance of a spiritually united home. If you are single, I can't say this strongly enough --- the Bible is clear that Christians can only marry another believer. That means you can only date another believer. I have been in the pastoral gig for a long time. I have heard all the excuses. They don't work. People have told me it is OK to date non-Christians as long as they don't marry a non-Christian. Folks, what is the reason to date someone in the first place? It is to see if the relationship will go further. It is to see if you have met the right one, the one you want to marry. There is no reason to date someone who doesn't know Jesus because you clearly know you cannot marry him or her. To date someone who doesn't know Jesus is leading that person on. In that person's mind, the reason to be dating you is that he or she has an interest in you. It is incredibly important you have a spiritually united home. I know far too many people who have piles of pain because they chose to be unequally yoked and violate God's Word on this one. It does not work out well.

How does this apply to those of us who are married and both know Jesus? There is a good application here for husbands. While the Bible clearly tells us that husbands are to be heads of their homes and heads of the leadership in the church, that doesn't mean women have nothing to contribute. Many women are extremely spiritually mature and gifted, just like Hannah. Many women desperately want to use their God-given gifts and passions to advance the kingdom of God. Godly husbands are to support their wives' spiritual commitments, not undermine their spiritual commitments, just like Elkanah did for Hannah.

Yes, your wife is first and foremost your wife. Yes, your wife is the mother of your children. Those are primary. If your wife is gifted to lead in AWANA or help in AWANA, support her as she tries to teach others about Jesus. If your wife is trying to make time to participate in Bible Study Fellowship so she can learn more of the Bible and help teach other women the Bible, if she can fit those commitments into her life while she is a wife and mother, encourage her. Make the sacrifices necessary in your family to help her. That is the role of a godly husband.

The sacrifice of Hannah's worship shows the gratitude of Hannah's heart.

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. 1 Samuel 1:24 (ESV)

Even though this details what may feel to be an obscure Old Testament sacrifice, there is a great lesson in these verses. Most English translations, such as the ESV that we use, say that Hannah brought a three-year-old bull. The original Hebrew can be read that Hannah brought three young bulls. While the

text could be translated either way, the main objection to translating it as three young bulls is that translators feel that wouldn't make sense. It would be too extreme of an economic sacrifice. I think that is the whole point. Three young bulls in that day was a staggering amount of wealth. I think that is the right translation. Hannah brought a huge sacrifice. Another reason for this text to mean three young bulls, not a three-year-old bull, is the gift of flour that Hannah gives with the bulls. It is an ephah of flour. That is 22 liters. Think 22 one-liter coke bottles full of flour. In the Old Testament law, it prescribed three-tenths of an ephah of flour should be offered with one young bull. She brings enough flour for three bulls. In addition, Hannah brought a skin of wine. That would also be enough for three bulls.

So when Hannah finally went to the temple with Samuel, she didn't go with a cheap offering. She went with an extremely expensive offering. Why did she bring so much?

Herein lies a biblical principle that is good for us to remember. The greater our gratitude to God, the greater we joyfully sacrifice to God. The greater our gratitude to God, the greater our sacrifices to God will be. Let me show you how this works in our everyday world.

Sometimes people are up late on Saturday nights. Sunday morning comes around and people tell me they are tired, so they decided to skip worship. Don't do that! The harder it is to get out of bed in the morning and come to church, the greater our worship is by being in church. The more we sacrifice to be in worship, the greater the worship we give to God is by being here.

This about our giving to God. Some people come to church and they tip God like he is a waiter. They put \$5 in the offering box. That isn't much sacrifice, and that isn't much worship. Others of us know the New Testament principle is we give generously, joyfully, sacrificially, and proportionately. Many people have chosen to give a tithe. They give 10 percent of their income to God. This year, many of you have given far above and beyond that in the capital fund. The greater the sacrifice we make, the greater the worship to God we give.

Right now we are reading through the Bible as a church. It is called the Take-Up-And-Read plan. It is one chapter a day five days a week. Some of you feel that is too much. You cannot get that done because life is too busy. Folks, if your life is that busy, that is an even better reason to make time to read a chapter of the Bible a day. The greater the sacrifice for you to do that, the greater the worship God receives when we make time to read his Word.

This is what we see with Hannah. She brought a gift that involved a great sacrifice because she wanted to give God great worship because she was incredibly grateful to God for giving her a son.

Hannah was able to give Samuel to the Lord because she knew it was the Lord who gave Samuel to her.

Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there. 1 Samuel 1:25–28 (ESV)

It begins by telling us they slaughtered the bull. Even though Hannah brought three bulls, it says here they slaughtered one bull. The one bull they slaughtered was used to dedicate Samuel to the Lord. The others were probably

used as a whole burnt offering for one and a fellowship offering for the other. Even though it says they sacrificed the bull singular, that only means one bull was used exclusively for dedicating Samuel to the Lord.

What we have is Hannah keeping her vow. The word lent is a little misleading. It sounds like borrowing something. The Hebrew word can also mean to dedicate something and leave it behind. That is what happened. In my mind, dedicate is a better English word. Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord but she also gave him to serve in the house of the Lord.

I always wondered how Hannah could do this. What enabled her to give her only son to serve in the tabernacle for life? I think Hannah understood that every good thing she had in her life was not due to her ingenuity. Every good thing she had was a gift from God. When she understood that, it enabled her to give back to God what God first gave to her.

When we think that way, doesn't that change the way we look at life? The paycheck we deposited in the bank. That is not our money. It is God's money. God is the one who gave you the ability to earn wealth. He is the one who gave us the health and the intellect needed to make a profit. He is the one who opened the doors of opportunity we needed. That means the money in the bank is not ours. It is ultimately a gift from God to us. When we think of it that way, it is a lot easier to be generous instead of stingy.

Some of you have gifts of building. When the city of Spencer approves the blueprints for our new Spencer facility, those people with construction gifts will be needed. We will be working in the evenings and on the weekends for most of that

build. It will be easy to stay home, but when you realize God gave you those construction gifts, it is a privilege to use them and give back to God a bit of what he gave to you.

Others of you have gifts of hospitality. Some of you ladies do remarkable things. Have you seen the gym and how the ladies organized it for the chili meal? The place looks great. Ladies, thank you for sacrificing your time to give back to God some of the gifts he gave to you!

When we view every good thing we have as from God, it makes us into grateful people. It makes us into joyful people. It makes us into generous and sacrificial people who love to give back what God gave to us.

I should also mention this was not the end of Hannah's story. The woman who could not conceive became very fertile after this.

Indeed the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord. 1 Samuel 2:21 (ESV)

She ended up as a mother of six. God honored her when she chose to honor him. This is a general principle in the Bible. God loves to honor those who give to him.

“...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38 (ESV)

Elkanah and Hannah provide a model of Christian parenting.

As I think about what it must have been like for Hannah to give Samuel to serve the Lord for life, I think of how counter-cultural that was in her day. In that day, children were to stay home and help on the farm. Children gave you

economic security. They cared for you in your old age. Sending a child away to serve the Lord for life was not what parents did.

Today, there are many Christian parents who would have a hard time with the idea of sending their children away to serve the Lord, as Hannah did. While many Christian parents are raising their children in the church they are subtly telling them the goal of their lives is to get a good-paying job and be a financial success. Children can subtly get the message that financial success is what is most important in life instead of dedicating their lives to faithfully following Christ and growing the kingdom of Christ. A job is a good thing, but it is always a secondary thing to following Jesus well.

Sometimes children want to spend a summer in missions work or to give their lives to serving as missionaries, pastors, or full-time Christian workers. Sometimes Christian parents discourage those things because those jobs don't carry status or financial reward.

The duty of Christian parents is to raise children who are faithful and fruitful for Christ in their generation. That is more important than raising children whose first priority is to be a success in the eyes of the world.

Hannah poured the Word of God into Samuel for the 3-4 years she had him in her home. We are to pour the Word of God into the lives of our children for the 18-19 years we have before they leave our homes.

Conclusion

I want to take a few minutes this morning to talk to the young parents. This message is especially applicable to you. Many of you are like Hannah. You

prayed for your children. You are now raising your children to know Jesus, and in a few brief years, they will leave your home.

Let me ask you. This morning, in response to God's Word, is the Holy Spirit asking you to dedicate your children to serve Jesus in whatever capacity God may choose, like Hannah dedicated young Samuel to the Lord? Like Hannah, are you OK with God taking your son or your daughter and moving them far away from home so they can do his work? Can they live far away in Shiloh instead of the hometown of Ramah?

If the Holy Spirit is prompting your heart to dedicate your children to serve God in any way God chooses to grow his kingdom with them and you release them to be used by God in any way God sees fit as long as they are used by God to grow his kingdom in their generations, as we close in prayer, I will ask you to look up and have your eyes meet mine. I will pray for you and your children as we close.

As I was chewing on this passage during the week, what came to mind was a conversation I had with my mother years ago. It was about an evening service in the Baptist church my family attended. The passage the pastor was preaching on was this passage. As he closed, he asked if anyone felt God calling them to dedicate their young children to God and to release them to be used wholly and unreservedly to the Lord in any way God saw fit anywhere God saw fit to take them.

My mother stood up in that service and released her plans for my life and gave me to God, asking him to use me any way he wanted in any place he

wanted. At the time, I was probably around 8 years old. I had no idea I would be a pastor, and neither did she. I also had no idea I would spend most of my adult life in the Midwest, far away from my parents' home in Philadelphia. I just know that my mother told me while it was hard on her for me to live far from home, she was OK with it. She dedicated me to God on that night. She told God to take me any place he wanted and to use me in any way he desired to grow his kingdom. She strongly felt God heard that prayer and honored it, just like God heard and honored Hannah's prayer.

As I was thinking about this, I began wondering if God may be in the business of doing this all over again. Today, running around our homes, are the little boys God wants to raise up to be pastors in their generation. Today, in our homes, are the little girls God wants to raise up to be in worship or children's ministry or another capacity in their generation.

Maybe God's process of raising up the leaders for the church in the next generation is beginning right here and now by prompting a mother or a father to dedicate her or his children to God. Maybe it will all begin today when there is a stake driven in the sand of time that today you asked your children to be God's leaders for good in their generation and you released them to God to be used in any way he sees fit.

If the Holy Spirit is prompting you and that is the desire of your heart, as I close in prayer, look up and have your eyes meet mine as we pray. Let's pray.



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