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Hannah: Praying in Pain

1 Samuel 1

Suffering and pain usually affect people's relationship with God in one of two ways. Sometimes we grow bitter or angry toward him for seemingly abandoning us and are tempted to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). At other times our afflictions drive us to a new dependence and humility before God that deepens our walk with him.

GROUP DISCUSSION. When you are in suffering or pain, how do you react? Give an example.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Have you ever felt like you were trapped in a hopeless situation? Explain.

For many years Hannah suffered the lonely pain of being unable to give birth in a culture where a woman's value was measured by her ability to bear children. From her we are able to learn how to pray in the midst of pain. *Read 1 Samuel 1.*

1. It is probable that Elkanah took a second wife because of Hannah's infertility. How do you think it made Hannah feel to live in the same home with the other wife and her children?

2. How did Peninnah add further pain and grief to Hannah each year when they went to Shiloh (vv. 3-7)?

3. Summarize the physical, emotional and spiritual effects of this ordeal on Hannah (vv. 7-8).

4. How might you have responded in Hannah's situation?

5. What does Hannah's prayer in verse 11 reveal about her desperation?

6. Why do you think God allows Hannah, and sometimes us, to reach such a point of despair?

7. How and why does Eli the priest respond to Hannah's intense prayer (vv. 12-14)?

How does he later serve as a channel of God's comfort and blessing to her (vv. 15-18)?

8. How does Hannah fulfill her vow to the Lord (vv. 20-28)?

Why would that have been difficult for her?

9. What crises and stresses are causing you to pray in pain at this time?

10. Hannah's son became the great prophet Samuel. How can her experience encourage you to persevere in prayer?

11. How have you seen God turn around a seemingly hopeless situation into great good?

Pray God would give you courage to trust him even when you can't fully understand what he is doing in your life.

Now or Later

Read Luke 18:1-8. What specific teaching on prayer does Jesus give from the parable of the persistent widow?

What else do you learn about the power of faithful prayer from the example of the widow?