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HANNAH: TRUST-FILLED PRAYER



When have you been persistent in asking for something you really wanted?

QUESTION #1

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THE POINT

*Christ-centered living chooses prayer,
not hopelessness.*



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Diet and exercise. That remains the primary formula for weight loss. Of course, other medical reasons will sometimes explain why someone might be overweight. But for the vast majority of us, if we want to drop a few pounds, it comes down to diet and exercise.

If the formula is that simple, why do so many of us struggle with healthy living? Beyond the other medical reasons, we can only assume that our ongoing struggle is not because we don't know what to do, but because we fail to put into practice what we know.

Prayer is like that. We know we ought to pray; we know we need to pray. But despite all the exhortations and commands, we often fail to put into practice what we know we should be doing.

For Christians, prayer must become second nature to us because the alternative to choosing a consistent and ongoing prayer life is choosing, by default, to live with a sense of hopelessness. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, showed us what it looks like to come to God with our needs and trust Him to act on our behalf.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Samuel 1:9-11

⁹ On one occasion, Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. ¹⁰ Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. ¹¹ Making a vow, she pleaded, "LORD of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."

In the first few verses of the Book of 1 Samuel, we are introduced to a man named Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Since the Israelites considered motherhood a mark of God's blessing, all was well for Peninnah because she had children. (See 1 Sam. 1:2.) But Hannah lived with a source of deep disappointment.

Hannah was childless. And just as children were seen as a mark of God's blessing, the Israelites believed childlessness was evidence of God's displeasure. This was the great disappointment and sadness that Hannah lived with day by day—that "thing" in the back of her mind coloring every relationship, tainting every joyous moment, and dampening every excitement.

What is that "thing" for you? What is your deepest source of disappointment—that unresolved pain that still lies deep in your heart?

The temptation for most of us is to simply bury that "thing" far away. We pile relationships, years, or even religious activity on top of it, trying to make ourselves forget how deeply hurt and disappointed we've been. We try and convince ourselves that as long as we don't think about it, we can eventually move past that source of disappointment.

What are some ways people deal with deep disappointment or unresolved pain?

QUESTION #2

The Lord has another remedy: pray. This is precisely what Hannah did, and we must do likewise. Don't bury those sources of pain, disappointment, and anxiety. Actively and consistently bring those needs to God.

In fact, turning to God in prayer is more than a suggestion for followers of Christ. It's a command. (See Phil. 4:6.)

What have you been taught about the nature and purpose of prayer?

QUESTION #3

1 Samuel 1:17-18,26-28

¹⁷ Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him."¹⁸ "May your servant find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent. ...²⁶ "Please, my lord," she said, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD.²⁷ I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for,²⁸ I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he worshiped the LORD there.

Verses 17-18 show the immediate result of Hannah's prayer: her burden was lifted. She'd cast her cares upon the Lord, and she was able to go on her way in peace.

Verses 26-28 show the longer-term result of Hannah's prayer: she gave birth to a child and named him Samuel. That name was an acknowledgment that this boy was an answer to prayer, since it's a wordplay meaning "requested from God" or "heard by God." For the rest of his life, Samuel would hear, over and over again, that his very existence was evidence of a God who hears and answers His people. Likewise, Hannah would live the rest of her life confidently knowing that God does indeed listen and is moved when His people pray. Because the boy was an answer to prayer, straight from God, Hannah knew that the life of her son ultimately belonged to the Lord; consequently, she entrusted this precious gift back to Him.

This was a happy ending for a woman who prayed and trusted in God. Of course, not all prayer requests end as we want them to end. What do we do when we pray for the job, the healing, or the provision—yet God answers “no”?

- ▶ **We recognize our limited vision.** It’s natural to be disappointed when God answers our prayers negatively, but we’re disappointed because of our limited vision. We cannot know the full effects of what we’re praying for, but God does. He sees. He knows. So when the answer comes back different than we’d like, it’s helpful to step back and simply acknowledge our limitations.
- ▶ **We remember God’s love.** Our circumstances are not the measure of God’s love for us. He has demonstrated His love once and for all through the cross of Christ. Though our spiritual equilibrium might be shaken momentarily when God doesn’t answer our prayers the way we think He should, it’s helpful for us to pause and remember the cross. His death is the measure of His love. His answers are always grounded in His love for us.
- ▶ **We trust in God’s wisdom.** It’s not enough for us to trust in God’s power to change our circumstances. We must also trust in His wise character. God is working for our good, which is to be conformed to the image of Christ. (See Rom. 8:28-29.) When He answers our prayers, God does so not only for our good, but for the good of all His children.

When have you been blessed by an answer to prayer?

QUESTION #4



1 Samuel 2:1-3

¹ Hannah prayed: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted up by the LORD. My mouth boasts over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. ² There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God. ³ Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by him.”

Hannah responded appropriately to God’s intervention on her behalf: she answered with thankful praise. We should adopt a primary response like Hannah’s—praising God for His grace, power, and provision.

The reason we live and move and have our being is because God, in His gracious love, continues to sustain the rest of the world and us. (See Acts 17:28.) Yet we are forgetful creatures. We simply go about our days failing to recognize the ongoing presence and provision of God for our every need. Instead of being characterized by gratitude, our days are more often filled with complaint, muttering, and frustration.

We would do well to remember we *always* have a reason to give thanks. Specifically, we can:

- ▶ **Remember what we deserve.** It strikes me that the moments when I’m the most ungrateful are also the moments in which I feel the most entitled. I start believing I deserve something better than the situation or circumstance in which I currently find myself. In fact, the only thing I’m entitled to is condemnation and eternal punishment.
- ▶ **Remember what we have.** Other moments when I am ungrateful stem from comparing myself to others. I get so caught up in my own covetousness that I don’t have any room to be grateful.
- ▶ **Remember what was paid.** A great price has been paid for us. The precious blood of Jesus was shed on our behalf. (See 1 Pet. 1:18-19.) By God’s grace, we can cultivate hearts that are no longer entitled nor covetous, but burn white-hot with praise for the Lamb that was slain.

*How does thankfulness benefit us as individuals?
As a community?*

QUESTION #5

PRAISING GOD

Hannah's praise can serve as a model for our prayers. Use the prompts below to record your experiences with God's grace, power, and provision.

How have you personally encountered God's grace?

How have you benefited from God's power?

When has God provided for you in a special way?

Consider spending a moment in quiet praise for each item you recorded above. Or, declare your praises out loud as a group.

"To be successful in God's work is to fall in line with His will and to do it His way. All that is pleasing to Him is a success!"

— HENRIETTA MEARS

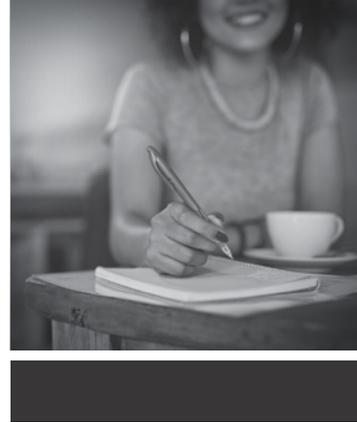
LIVE IT OUT

How will you make prayer a priority in the days to come? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Offer thanks.** What are three blessings for which you have not thanked God? Pause right now and pray a prayer of thanksgiving for each of those blessings.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Memorize Philippians 4:6-7 as a reminder to take your needs to God and trust His answer.
- ▶ **Journal.** Begin a gratitude journal. Spend a few moments each day writing specific prayers of gratitude. Watch how your heart begins to change.

The story of Hannah reminds us that we will face trouble and disappointment. But in the midst of that disappointment, there is an opportunity for trust-filled prayer. Praying with trust leads to gratitude for a God who provides not what we want, but always what we need.

My thoughts



Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLsecondnature**