

DEFEATING DIACOURAGEMENT Lesson Three - Discouraged People in the Bible:

Hannah

September 22, 2020

Review:

Can you quote Psalm 142:1 - 2?

Hannah:

1 Samuel 1:1-8

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.² 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.

³ Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD.⁴ On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.⁶ And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb.⁷ So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat.⁸ And Elkanah, her husband, said to her,

“Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

An unfulfilled desire and dream—this is the cause of Hannah’s discouragement and despair. As we study Hannah, we will find important guidance on how to deal with the very discouraging unfulfilled desires of our hearts.

For Hannah, barrenness carried a much stronger meaning than today. It was not only the unfulfilled desire of a woman’s heart, but it tended to be a social disgrace. And the fault was seen to be the woman’s! Then, she had to put up with Peninnah’s sarcasm and hatefulness. Yet Hannah’s husband, Elkanah, truly loved her and tried to comfort her in his own male way. That, of course, didn’t work.

Here are some important things to remember when you’re going through a time of discouragement:

- There are times when no person on earth can truly understand your pain and give you the comfort you need.
- People frequently don’t understand your pain.

Romans 12:15:

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

- Choose words carefully when someone is discouraged.
- If someone you expect to help you doesn’t come through, it discourages you even more.

1 Samuel 1:9-20

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD’s house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not

forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.”

¹⁵ “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

¹⁷ Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”

¹⁸ She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

Notice what Hannah did here, as she coped with her grief:

- She wept much.
- She prayed to the Lord.

Hannah didn't give up praying. Notice that she brought her struggle into the open. No denial. No pretending. She was sorely distressed, and she wept much.

Hannah was in great anguish. One translation says she was in “bitterness of soul.” This bitterness of soul was not a bitter spirit. There is a difference. A bitter spirit is one that is harbored and nurtured; full of envy and malice and unforgiveness. But her soul is anguished. God understands a “bitterness of soul” – an anguished heart. But if your spirit is full of

bitterness—if your discouragement drives you to bitterness, then the enemy of your soul is winning the battle!

Consider Hannah options when her desires and longings were not fulfilled. They are the same as ours when we have unfulfilled desires. She could have:

- Been angry with God
- Taken revenge on Peninnah
- Had a fight with Elkanah
- Sulked and had a pity party
- Turned into a bitter woman
- Been envious of every other woman who had a baby

And where would any of those options take her—or me and you?

What are the missing things in your life that have caused you to be discouraged?

People with unfulfilled desires can approach their lives with one of two different attitudes:

- Acceptance or bitterness.

Acceptance doesn't mean you don't keep praying about it and asking for your desire. It doesn't mean you don't have anguish and tears at times. It doesn't mean that your unfulfilled desire becomes less important to you. But if you have an accepting heart, it means there is a balm for your soul, a peace that passes understanding.

Acceptance is possible when you actively and continuously bring your thoughts into captivity and make them obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Never forget that Jesus totally understands what you're going through. He is not like Elkanah; he gets it!

Eli, a man of God, responded with a promise for Hannah:

*"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."
(1 Samuel 1:17)*

Once she had this assurance from God, 1 Samuel 1:18 tells us:

Then she went her way and ate something, and her _____ was no longer _____.

What does this one sentence tell us about the way Hannah was while she was in such anguish and grief?

Hannah is an example to us in how we should combat discouragement:

Pray without ceasing and be willing to wait!

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think,⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them

off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Notice verse 7:

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?

God honors persistent prayer, because it shows a depth of faith that pleases him.

Does this mean that we can have every desire of our hearts fulfilled?

How do we reconcile these experiences with what Jesus said in this parable: *“Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly”* (verse 7).

I believe some of these questions will go unanswered until we get to heaven. But here are some thoughts that may be helpful:

Sometimes our unfulfilled desires are the result of sin—ours or someone else's. While God always forgives and forgets, in this life we are not always delivered from the consequences of sin.

Sometimes our unfulfilled desires become the idols of our lives, and God does not want us to have any other god before him.

Sometimes God is sparing us pain and sorrow that we'll never appreciate until we get to heaven.

God never overrides his principle of giving to mankind free will, and therefore someone else's refusal to be obedient to God may cause us to have an unfulfilled desire.

The bottom line is, it comes down to whether or not we trust God. If we truly believe he is a good God and he does what is good, then we must sometimes simply come back to that basic trust, and say with Job, *“Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him”* (Job 13:15).

Hannah was assured of an answer, and that cured her discouragement. However, notice that the answer didn't come right away. It came “in the course of time.”

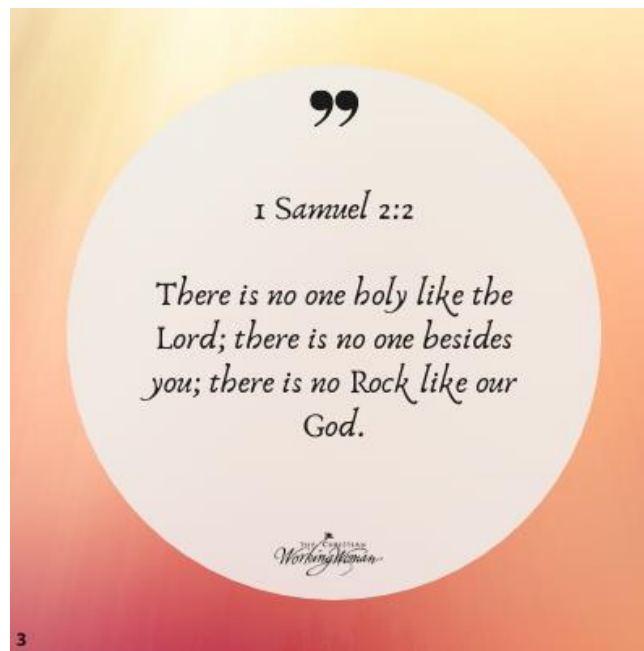
Conclusion

From Hannah's life we see how unfulfilled desires and crisis moments in our lives are often harbingers of discouragement. The way we deal with these issues is through prayer—persistent prayer. Don't stop praying about it. But at the same time, relinquish it to Jesus.

Every day this week relinquish your unfulfilled desire(s) to God and give him permission to replace it, change it, or fulfill it. When you do that, it greatly reduces your stress and anxiety. But don't be surprised to discover that you have to do it repeatedly.

Suggested Assignment for Lesson Three

Memorize: 1 Samuel 2:2



Lesson Two

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Psalm 142:1-2

*I cry aloud to the Lord; I lift up
my voice to the Lord for mercy.*

*I pour out before him my
complaint; before him I tell my
trouble.*

THE CHRISTIAN
Working Woman

2

Lesson One

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2 Corinthians 10:4

*The weapons we fight with are
not the weapons of the world.*

*On the contrary, they have
divine power to demolish
strongholds.*

THE CHRISTIAN
Working Woman

1