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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Faithful During Grief 1 Samuel 1:9-20

Lesson Background and Introduction

The events in the early chapters of 1 Samuel occur toward the end of the period when the judges provided leadership for the nation of Israel. The book of Judges is filled with turmoil and chaos due to Israel's pattern of disobedience and rebellion against God. This trend continues into 1 Samuel with a misbehaving priestly family. Hannah's turmoil is of a different kind: the strife that exists within a family and the heartbreak of a barren woman in that family. Hers was the grief of a hope unfulfilled, a desire for the joys of motherhood that she could see other women experiencing but which had been denied her. Hannah felt cruelly separated from those women and in some cases was likely ostracized by them. In a society in which a woman's primary vocation was to be a mother, infertility was often taken as a sign of God's displeasure and resulted in a loss of status. Hannah experienced the disdain of society and likely wondered whether the Lord saw her in a similar light. Aside from the societal stigma attached to barrenness in biblical times, the surroundings in Hannah's home made her condition even more excruciating. Elkanah, Hannah's husband, had another wife besides Hannah, named Peninnah. Not only did Peninnah have children, but she taunted Hannah mercilessly for her inability to bear children (1 Samuel 1:6, 7). Peninnah was downright cruel in reminding Hannah of her barren condition. It is hard to imagine how deeply Hannah was hurt by such malicious words from a woman she could not simply cut out of her life. Elkanah was a well-intentioned man and sympathetic toward Hannah, but he did not grasp fully the extent of her anguish. When Hannah would become so upset during their annual sacrifice that she refused to eat (1 Samuel 1:3, 7).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Hannah's Grief - Hannah, the mother of the prophet and last judge in Israel, teaches us a valuable lesson about God's response to a troubled heart. Hannah desperately wanted a child, but the Lord had closed her womb. Since the culture allowed a husband to take another spouse if the first wife produced no offspring, Hannah's husband Elkanah married Peninnah, and God blessed their union with several sons and daughters. Elkanah still loved and favored Hannah, so Peninnah envied Hannah and constantly sought to irritate Hannah with insults, which heightened Hannah's bitterness.

Hannah's Prayer and Eli's Response - One year while the family was celebrating a feast at God's tabernacle in Shiloh, Hannah hurt so badly she left the celebration table and walked to the tabernacle. She needed comfort in her distress, the kind only God supplies. Hannah's lips moved as she prayed, but she uttered no sound. She addressed herself to the Lord as His handmaiden. Hannah begged God for a son, promising to give him back to the Lord. In God's providential plan, Eli the priest was there at the same time Hannah prayed. He accused her of being drunk, and she quickly defended herself. Her heart was broken, she explained, and she was pouring it all out before the Lord. On God's behalf, Eli told her to go and be happy and at peace. Her petition would be answered.

God Answered - Hannah returned to her family a new woman. She'd left her anguish at the tabernacle and now moved forward in confidence, trusting God, and filled with joy. God honored His word. She and Elkanah conceived, and nine months later she held Samuel in her arms.

God's Ministry in Times of Suffering - Like Hannah, at various times God's children feel He is not answering our prayers. All alone and suffering, we begin to think the Father has forgotten all about us. This is never true. God may choose to be silent or delay answering a prayer, but this is always according to His wisdom. Rest assured He's aware of each person's grief, heartbreak, and pain. He will answer at the right time and in the right way.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Keep living for Him faithfully and waiting patiently for His plan

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

God, You are forever faithful and good. Help us to keep trusting in You, even when we experience heartache

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people
(Luke 1:25 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Dec 17, 2018)

Series: Responding to God's Grace

UNIT: God is Faithful

NEXT WEEK

Faithful During Uncertainty

(Exodus 16:1-15)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Hannah's Grief and Faithful Vow (1 Sam 1:9-11)

Grief because of downcast soul (9-10)

- Downcast because of being childless, but full of faith (Rom 4:18-21)
- Downcast but full of hope (Ps 42:5-6)
- Downcast but calling on One who is higher (Ps 61:1-2)
- Downcast but calling on our refuge and portion (Ps 142:2-5)
- Downcast but knowing that even Jesus got overwhelmed with sorrow (Mark 14:33-34)
- Downcast but trusting in God (Ps 56:3)

Vow of dedication to God (11)

- Vow that must be kept (Eccles 5:4)
- Vow that God requires fulfillment (Deut 23:21)
- Vow that must be obeyed even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)
- Vow that is not rashly given (Prov 20:25)
- Vow that must not be broken (Num 30:1-2)

Eli's Concern and Faithful Blessing (1 Sam 1:12-18)

Concern about ineffective prayer (12-13)

- Ineffective because of being filled with pride (Luke 18:10-14)
- Ineffective because of doing to be seen and heard by others (Luke 20:47)
- Ineffective because of thinking we know how to pray (Rom 8:26)
- Ineffective because of broken relationships (1 Peter 3:7)
- Ineffective because of disobedience (Prov 28:9)

Concern about drunkenness (14-16)

- Concern because the wickedness of drunkenness (Prov 23:29-35)
- Concern because it inhabits being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18)
- Concern because drunkenness causes poor judgment (Prov 23:20-21)
- Concern because not all who seem to be drunk are not drunk (Acts 2:15)

Blessing of answered prayer (17-18)

- Answered prayers because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)
- Answered prayers because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)
- Answered prayers because God promises it for those who ask and seek (Matt 7:7-8)
- Answered prayers because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)
- Answered prayer through being righteous (James 5:16-18)

God's Faithful Provision (1 Sam 1:19-20)

Provision of remembrance (19)

- God remembers those who fear Him (Eccl 8:12)
- God remembers the suffering of His saints (Ps 56:8)
- God remembers us to bless us (Ps 115:12)
- God remembers us because of His covenants (Ps 106:45)
- God remembers us because of His promises (Mal 3:16-18)

Provision of child (20)

- Children are a reward from God (Ps 127:3-5)
- Children are a blessing from God (Ps 128:3-4)
- Children are a sigh and symbol of God's provision (Isa 8:18)
- Children are a crown to the aged (Prov 17:6)
- Children who have been promised by God (Luke 1:13)
- Children to provide a family for those who fear God (Exodus 1:21)