

WOMEN OF PRAYER

HANNAH

Stonecroft Prayer Resource

What Does the Bible Say?

Begin with prayer, asking God to teach you through His Word.

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-28.

Questions for Discussion

- How did Hannah approach the Lord in prayer (1 Samuel 1:10-16)? Why is that important?
- Why do you think God waited so many years to answer her prayer? What was the result of that waiting period (1 Samuel 1:20; 7:5-6)?
- What promise did Hannah make to God? Was she faithful to that promise (1 Samuel 1:11, 27-28)?

Summary

God used Hannah's circumstances to mold her until she cried out to Him in desperation for her heart's desire: a child. God wasn't punishing her by making her unfruitful; rather, He was *preparing* her to bear the son who would lead Israel. By bringing her desire to God, Hannah revealed her faith and trust in the God of the future, even though she did not see what lay ahead. God provided for her in more than one way. He gave her peace, and He gave her the son she so greatly desired.

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

Questions for Discussion

- List the things Hannah records about God in her prayer.
- How could these truths about God influence your prayer life?

Summary

God heard the cries of Hannah's heart and answered her prayer. But what sets her apart is that she did not worship the answer to her prayer. She worshiped God. Her choice to release her son revealed that seeking God was her greatest desire. She learned to trust Him with everything—her bitter tears, her son, and her future. Oh, how God must have delighted in her love for Him, enough to have her prayer recorded for all of eternity.

HANNAH

What Does it Mean?

From Hannah's story, we learn a great deal about God. We see that God's timing is perfect, and He brings blessings out of suffering. Hannah went through desperate times, but then bore a son who would become the leader of Israel. The ultimate blessing for Hannah was greater intimacy with God.

One way God answers prayer is by saying, "Wait." One reason God says, "Wait", is to refine us. Hannah was brought to a place where she could surrender the answer of her prayer to the Lord, revealing she desired Him more than her answer. God also refines us until we agree that He is enough for us. Sometimes He will wait to give an answer until we can give it back to Him instead of clutching to it.

We also learn that God responds to honest prayer. Hannah didn't hide the depth of her desire, but wept and pleaded for it. She brought her misery to the Lord and acknowledged Him as the Almighty One who could answer her (1 Samuel 1:11).

What Can We Do Now?

- Is there a prayer you have been praying individually or corporately that God has yet to answer? How might He be refining you in this waiting period? (Pause to pray about these things, asking God to show you how to respond.)
- Think of a recent trial in your life. Where was the first place you went for comfort or help?
- Why do you think it is important to be honest with God in our prayers? What other examples in Scripture come to mind of courageous honesty in prayer?
- Is there a desire in your heart that you've hesitated to bring to God? If so, why?
- Conclude your time by praising God using Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10). You might personalize it to God like this, "My heart rejoices in You, Lord," or praise Him in your own words for the attributes listed.

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Summary

As women of prayer in our time, let's follow Hannah's example by waiting on God, trusting Him to mold our hearts and honestly sharing our desires with Him. Through it all, may we praise Him and seek to be satisfied fully in Him.

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PERSISTENT WIDOW

Stonecroft Prayer Resource

What Does the Bible Say?

Begin with prayer, asking God to teach you through His Word.

Read Luke 18:1-8.

Questions for Discussion

- Who is Jesus speaking to?
- Who does the widow represent?
- Who does the judge represent?
- What are the similarities and differences between the judge and God?
- How is the widow similar to and different from us?
- Why does the judge answer the widow's request?
- What Scriptures can you think of that reveal God's reasons for answering our requests? (e.g., John 14:13, Luke 11:5-13, 1 Peter 5:7)

What Does it Mean?

Read Luke 18:1-8 again.

Jesus gathered His disciples to teach them to pray and not give up. In the parable, the widow kept coming to an unjust judge with her request. Because of her persistence, even this self-centered man gave her what she desired. Our Father in Heaven is the opposite of the unjust judge. He cares for His people and will do what is right and just. If a corrupt judge will respond to persistence, how much more will our loving God answer us?

Historically, widows were powerless in court without a husband. We can relate to the widow because we are powerless before the court of Heaven if we try to approach God based on our own merit. In contrast, we are different than the widow because we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who speaks to the heavenly Judge in our defense (1 John 2:1). In Christ, we are powerful and can come to the Father with our urgent, relentless prayers.

PERSISTENT WIDOW

“To practice persistence does more to change our hearts and minds than His, and it helps us understand and express the intensity of our need.”¹

Knowing God will bring justice to the earth motivates us to be persistent in prayer. We are challenged to be faithful and diligent, to not give up. The Lord wants to hear our deepest desires and bring justice on our behalf.

What Can We Do Now?

Take time to consider each of these questions for your own life or your group as a whole. Spend time in prayer with the Lord after each set of questions.

- Our understanding of God shapes the way we pray. Take a moment to consider how you pray, and what it reveals about how you perceive God. Do you believe God is completely just and will bring justice to the earth? How does this understanding affect your prayers?

(Take time to pray.)

- Discuss the difference between approaching God based on your own merit and coming to Him based on Christ’s righteousness given to you through faith. How does this difference affect your prayers?

(Take time to pray.)

- **Luke 18:1**—*“Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them how they should pray and not give up.”* Is there anything in your life that you have given up praying for? Share a victory or struggle you’ve had in being persistent in prayer. Share practical tips that have helped you be faithful in prayer.

(Take time to encourage and pray with one another for a renewed spirit in prayer.)

- **Luke 18:8**—If Christ returned today, what kind of prayer would He find in you? How can you be more prepared? Where does your prayer focus need to be?

(Take time to pray.)

¹ *Life Application Study Bible*, © 2000 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 1767