



To Where Does Stress Drive You?

By Matthew K. Boyle on June 4, 2024

TODAY'S READING: 1 Samuel 1

All of us have had moments when we want something so badly—and for right and good reasons—and yet the desire remains elusive. It never manifests tangibly. We seek the Lord, praying fervently, and nothing appears to happen.

Or does it?

Hannah experienced deep distress because of her barrenness. She *“wept bitterly,”* verse 10 tells us. To add insult to injury, Peninnah (Hannah’s “rival”; see verse 6) chided her with graceless and unrelenting fervor. This went on for years. Even when Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, the pride of Peninnah followed her.

Have you ever thought how God was shaping Hannah through this experience? We tend to focus on the issue rather than the character that God develops as we encounter unfulfilled desires. As Hannah faced her distress, where did it drive her? It drove her to the Lord in prayer:

“O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life...” (vs. 11, ESV).

Though the passage only records one prayer, we know she went to the house of the Lord yearly, most likely uttering a similar prayer which only increased in intensity as the years rolled on. How much was Hannah molded and shaped into dependence on God through her distress?

Ask yourself these questions: What is God doing in your life as you face distress? Do you seek the Lord as Hannah did, or do you seek resolve in some worldly fashion?

God did indeed answer Hannah’s prayer by giving her a son named Samuel who was dedicated to serve in the temple. Later, God used Samuel as a prophet and a priest who in turn helped to shape perhaps the greatest king in Israel’s history, David, outside of the Messiah. God’s design for us is likewise to be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

Ultimately, everything we encounter should drive us to him.

PRAYER: Lord, when I face distress, remind me that you are more concerned with my character being conformed to the likeness of Jesus. Drive me to him in challenging times.

TOMORROW'S READING: 1 Kings 10

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