

God Can Make Bad Situations Good

Connecting the Old with the New

There are many kinds of trials that we endure—hardships, disasters, illnesses, heartbreak, conflicts, struggling against sin, or even God’s tough love and discipline. Whatever we are going through, God has guidance and comfort to help us. Let’s look at two encouraging and enlightening passages of scripture about resilience through hard times.

· **Read 1 Samuel 1-2:21.**

- Who are the characters in this passage?
- Why do you think Peninnah provoked Hannah?
- What emotions was Hannah feeling?
- Share about grief or loss that you have experienced in your life, only to the extent that you are comfortable. How did you recover and how did God come through for you? Or, if your experience is current, how can we support you?
- How does Elkanah’s response to Hannah reflect God’s response to us when we are sad? How does this reassure us?
- What is the name meaning of Samuel? What does this tell us about our own prayers?
- Hannah dedicated her son to the Lord to live with Eli. This act was joyful and likely painful.

Share about one of the following:

1. A time when you gave up a blessing to God.
2. A blessing you feel God may be calling you to give up for Him.
3. A time you let go of someone you love for the greater good.

- What was Samuel’s purpose, and why was Hannah’s suffering therefore important?
- Ultimately, Hannah had four sons and two daughters over the course of her lifetime (six children). So, why do you think she says, “She who was barren has born seven children” in 1 Sam 2:5? (Consider 1 Sam 2:10 in speculating).
- What is the meaning behind Hannah’s suffering in light of how it impacted her relationship with God? Who does Hannah say that God is in her joyful prayer?
- How are Hannah’s and Jesus’s stories similar?

· Read James 1:1-8

- James (technically Jacob) was Jesus’s brother. While Paul went to plant churches among the Gentiles, James lead the Jewish Messianic church in Jerusalem. During these days, the Jews faced famine, poverty, and persecution by the Jewish religious leaders.
- Think of a trial of any kind that you have gone through. How did this trial bring out your weaknesses? How did it strengthen you as a person?
- How do you tend to view and relate to God when you are going through hard times?
- What do trials do in our lives, according to James?
- Why should we be joyful about enduring trials? How does that make sense? (Read Romans 5:3-5 & Hebrews 12:1-2 for further understanding).
- What does James mean when he tells us to let perseverance finish its work? What is the outcome of perseverance? (Read 1 Peter 5:10 and Hebrews 12:11 for further understanding).
- Sometimes, we don’t like to admit that we don’t know or that we need help because we feel embarrassed. However, what is God’s response to us when we ask for wisdom? How can knowing this influence our approach to God?
- What does it mean to be like a wave blown and tossed by the wind?
- What does it mean to be wise amidst trials? How does wisdom change how we view and relate to God?

Consolidating what we have learned:

- How does Hannah exemplify perseverance? At which points in Hannah’s story do you see endurance, character, hope, and wisdom in her?
- Who would be an “Elkanah” or a “James” in your life (someone who imparts wisdom)? What words of encouragement have they said to you that you can share with a suffering person in your life?
- How has this lesson challenged or inspired you to move from doubt to faith?
- What spiritual and tangible breakthrough in your life can we pray for together today?