



Links Players

SIX DEGREES FROM SUFFERING: HANNAH

“Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” (1 Samuel 1:16, NIV)

QUIZZES ARE EVERYWHERE THESE DAYS, but take a few seconds to look this one over. It’s only one question. Among these, which do you consider suffering:

- a) the bullying punches you received in your junior high locker room?
- b) the shanks you contracted in the middle of your big invitational?
- c) the diagnosis your spouse’s doctor delivered of advanced cancer?
- d) the lawsuit challenging your company’s stance on a moral issue?

I know, these may not all fall on you with the same force. In fact, the sh-sh-shanks looks rather silly on this list, but it can take a big bite out of your spirit in the same way the others can, if only for a little while.

Suffering is one of those topics we don’t like to talk about until it comes upon us. Then we’re all ears. *What does God have to say to me here? Is he taking me through some sort of “life academy”?* If you’re asking such questions, you’re making the right move. But you’re even smarter if you ask these questions *before* suffering comes on you. One way to do this is to look at how suffering affected God’s people in Scripture. What were their troubles and how did they respond? For the next six weeks, we’ll try to draw lessons (or “earn degrees”) from the suffering we find in our Bibles.

Today we turn to 1 Samuel, where we find Hannah, a woman whose woes were both communal and personal. She was barren, unable to have children. Though her husband loved her dearly, the expectations of the culture and the taunting of her husband’s other wife left her broken by her grief.

At the temple in Shiloh, “in bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD.” When Eli the priest confronted her about her drunkenness, Hannah had to defend herself again. “I am not drunk,” she told him. “I am pouring out my soul to the LORD.” Eli then blessed her. In the course of time, she birthed a son.

Our first lesson in suffering is one we learn from Hannah: Let your troubles drive you to God. We do not always know how he will answer our emotional prayers, but we know he is willing to hear them. Pour out your soul, as weakly as you may be able. Put yourself in God’s care and let him soothe your suffering.

Opening questions How do you find yourself suffering most painfully on the golf course? Do you have an avenue for relief? • Is there a certain arena of suffering in your life right now? Has it changed the way you approach God?

READING 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Psalm 22:1-11; Psalm 22:19-28

Hannah’s example (1 Samuel 1)

What leaps out at you from Hannah’s story? Have you ever faced a trouble as weighty as hers? How comfortable are you with going to God openly about your troubles?

David’s honest pleas (Psalm 22:1-11)

Are you surprised by the directness of David’s words before God? Do you find there are circumstances in your life where “no one is there to help”? How much faith do you have to turn to God in times like these?

What God can do (Psalm 22:19-28)

The tone of David’s words turn to recognition of God’s strength. What attributes or assurances of God give foundation to our trusting him?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/rNNqzKqkUSI>