

SLIDE 1. Series: Prayers of the Bible

Teaching: *Tears and Prayers*

Sunday October 18, 2026

Good morning, SLC!

As many of you know, I enjoy (and have recommended) the daily readings and prayers found on the Lectio 365 APP. And when I thought about what to teach about this Fall – I was inspired by our week-long time of praying with the world as led by 24 / 7 Prayer.

To teach about prayer.

24 / 7 Prayer is an International Prayer Ministry – begun in 1999 by Author and Pastor, Pete Greig. There has been, then, more than 25 years of non-stop prayer since its small beginning. Now, there are more than 155 different nations praying 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week throughout the world, and more than 25,000 prayer rooms scattered across the globe.

This is what we joined when we prayed through the week of Sep. 6 – 13.

A month ago.

And we haven't stopped praying!

We pray every Tuesday and Sunday morning. We pray in our small groups. We pray for each other through our website prayer connection. We pray at our Leadership Team meetings – for each other and for the church.

We pray because we choose to believe that God hears and speaks to us and answers our prayers.

We choose to believe what God's Word tells us about prayer...

SLIDE 2. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*

(Jas. 5:16).

Even if prayer is a bit of a mystery...

SLIDE 3. *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him* (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

Even when we can't see it...

We keep praying. To stay connected and rooted to the Father who loves us!

SLIDE 4. *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus* (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

God's will – God's hope – God's desire is for us to live joyful, prayerful, and thankful lives!

24 / 7 Prayer also developed the Lectio 365 APP.

Which has been since Sep. 1 and will be until Advent - highlighting prayers of the bible. As will we.

Specifically, I'd like to take a little bit of time with you to look at the prayer of Hannah as found in 1 Samuel 1:10-18 (because of its sheer emotional honesty)...

SLIDE 5. *In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son...*

SLIDE 6. *...then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."*

So, a little bit of context...

Hannah is the wife of a man named Elkanah.

Actually she is one wife of two wives to Elkanah.

He having two wives (most likely) because Hannah was barren – and Ancient Near Eastern culture pressured men to take a second wife to secure heirs, family legacy, continuation of lineage.

Cultural pressure – not biblical permission!

When they would travel to their local church to make sacrifices for various reasons and remembrances – the other wife, Penninah, would provoke Hannah to irritate her – as if it wasn't enough for Hannah to endure the shame of her barrenness but to also be reminded of it by her rival!

This went on year after year.

Penninah would provoke Hannah until she wept and wouldn't eat.

Once when they had finished eating and drinking at one of these days of commemoration and sacrifice - Hannah prayed.

But first (and perhaps throughout her prayer) she wept – bitterly.

Crushed by her inability to bear children.
Doubly crushed by a woman who taunted her on that basis.

The Lord giving and withholding children.

SLIDE 7. When have you wept in prayer? When have you been so crushed by a circumstance or someone else that you prayed through tears?

You are not alone.

Tears and prayers are mingled together throughout the books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, and the Psalms.

And tears and prayers are mingled together in the stories of those around us who place their trust in God.

My prayer for my son when he was struggling to breathe at birth.
My prayer for my daughter who aches with restlessness.
My prayer for my wife the day she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

This is not a lack of faith. It is a turning to God with all of me. No denials. No pretense. Just coming in honesty. Pouring out my soul.

Hannah prayed...

Look on me. Remember me. Don't forget me.

As if God could.

Which is to say that her anguished pleading for God to remember her was not just to recall that Hanna existed – it was a call to God to go into action on her behalf!

Heal my son, Lord.

Give my daughter peace, Lord.

Protect my wife, Lord.

Hannah desperately wanted to bear a child. So she asked God for a son and then, in the same breath, offered the child back to him – voluntarily vowing to dedicate the child in the way God required of Samson – the Nazirite vow – to never shave his head – as a symbol of dedication to the service of the Lord.

Though – in this case – not for a limited time - but for a life time!

Hannah knows that her child would be a gift from God (should God give her one) and prayerfully determines that the best thing she can do is to dedicate that gift back to him.

"Childless and voiceless, Hannah expresses her desperate prayers through tears," reflected Cdn. Jill Weber on the Sep. 24 morning Lectio 365. "Gripped with grief and anguish, pouring out her soul to the Lord, she's mistaken for a drunkard."

SLIDE 8. *As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put your wine away your wine."*

Anguished. Weeping. Praying from the heart. Moving her lips. Whispering?

I imagine the scene: a person come to church, sobbing throughout the service, coming forward at the end, puffy eyes, moaning – tears having left a trace of their path down the face.

What would I make of that?

Why did Eli make of Hannah what he did?

Why did he mistake her for being drunk?

Maybe because she was so anguished and expressing it? Maybe a lack of spiritual discernment? Maybe because it wasn't uncommon for drunken people to enter the sanctuary? Maybe this was a sign of the moral and religious deterioration of the time?

Whatever the case, Eli made some assumptions...

SLIDE 9. *"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."*

Can you imagine?!

Can you imagine being so grief struck to the point of tears and prayers that someone would then accuse you of being drunk?!

Hannah – barren, shamed for it – now accused of wickedness!

But see how she responds – despite the false accusation – and this new layer of hurt – Hannah responds with deference ("my lord") and with humility (again – being honest and vulnerable about what she was doing).

And without defensiveness.

She is not a "wicked woman" – a Hebrew expression for – "troublemaker."

She is deeply troubled.

Hanna's prayer wasn't formulaic or ritual. It was all of her before a listening God.

You can almost hear Eli backpedaling...

SLIDE 10. *Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."*

What a shift – from accuser to blessing.

His blessing functioned as a retraction of his accusation (though we would've wanted to see more – like maybe a humble apology?!). And by addressing her respectfully – and calling upon the God of Israel – he validated her integrity and empathized with her burden in prayer.

Which was enough for Hannah...

SLIDE 11. *She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes"* (Which is an old-school way of saying - AMEN). ***Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.***

It would be a mistake to tell yourself that she felt better because she had a Toblerone chocolate bar. And not just because there were no such things as Toblerones back in the day.

Man, we are living in such a good time in history!

Hannah said AMEN to the blessing – which is to say - SO BE IT or - IT IS TRUE. She received and believed the blessing which then lifted her heart.

And notice – her heart was lifted BEFORE she conceived.

And conceive she did. Hannah gave birth to a baby boy and named him, Samuel – who became the Lord's prophet before Kings Saul and David.

But prayers don't always end this way, do they?

So perhaps we should ask...

SLIDE 12. What does *God* make of *our* tearful prayers?

a. He counts and collects our tears (Ps. 56:8).

b. He draws near (Ps. 34:18).

c. He will wipe away every tear (Rev. 21:4).

The God of past, present, and future – keeps track of all our sorrows, collects our tears in a bottle, records them in his book – seen and never forgotten (Ps. 56:8); is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Ps. 34:18); will someday wipe away crying and pain and tears and death (Rev. 21:4).

God honors the outpouring of our hearts.

He does not see our tearful prayers as weakness but as vulnerable acts of trust.

He dignifies our humanity.

So – let's keep going to God as he comes to us, let's keep pouring out of souls to him, let's keep receiving these blessings (SLIDE 12) and believe them.

And remember– sometimes – prayers do end well, don't they?

My son is now 29 and has a child of his own.

My daughter is exploring life in the U.K.

My wife is alive!

Hanna had Samuel.

Every good thing in our lives is a gift from a generous God who loves us.

So then – like Hanna...

SLIDE 13. How can we offer God's good gifts back to Him for his glory?

a. Believe the blessings.

b. Give thanks and tell stories.

c. Use your gifts to serve others.

Believe that God is for you, not against you (Ro. 8:31), that God has given you all you need for life and godliness (2 Pt. 1:3), that God is the source of every good and perfect gift in your life (Jas. 1:17).

Believe these blessings (and others – as they are described in the bible) and let them transform you through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Moving from downcast to confident.

Give thanks to God. Trace every blessing back to him (not yourself).

Say it out loud to God, "Thank you, God for _____."

Don't just acknowledge God's generosity, though – relish in it.

And then say it out loud to others. Tell people how you see God answering your prayers. Tell people about how you seem to get a sense of God's presence in your day. Tell people about the adventure of doing things in God's name.

The bible says: *As each of us has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace* (1 Pt. 4:10).

Given to give back. Given to dedicate to God. Given to use in service of others – in our church and wherever you find yourself in your days.

I was so struck by Hanna's prayer when I gave myself the time to sit with it weeks ago on Sep. 24. I was moved and inspired by her prayer.

She is an example to us that we can come to God with our whole selves, pour out our hearts, and trust that God hears and answers us.

Sometimes the answer is God's presence in the raw and vulnerable stillness of a prayer like Hanna's – to remind ourselves that God sees and never forgets our tears, that God is always near, and that there will come a day when there will be no more tears!

And sometimes the answer seems clear – building our belief by experience that God blesses, allowing us a chance to be grateful – to tell him so – and to tell others, and giving us an opportunity to give back to God – a life of serving others with the gifts he has given us!

I hope that Hanna's prayer has encouraged you today!