



The Peace of God's Presence

Text: 1 Samuel 1: 1-20

Grow Group and Discipleship Director Luann Riley

1. Think about a time that you experienced unfulfilled desires. Maybe it's now. Maybe it's in the past but as you think through desires in your heart (a prodigal child, a difficult relationship, an illness, etc.) share with the group the situation and what your prayer is in this season. How are/did you handle it? What is/did the Lord teaching you through it?
2. Read 1 Samuel 1: 1-20.
 - a. How important was Elkanah's love to Hannah and why? (v.4-6). Was it enough for her?
 - b. Do you see patterns in your life where your unfulfilled desire has become an idol? Where nothing else could meet your needs?
 - c. Look at vs. 10-11 and discuss the tension between Hannah's pain and her devotion to God. Give me a son... (her cry) he will be yours (her devotion). How do you live with this tension of crying out for something from God and remaining devoted despite what the outcome might be?
3. Read John 4:10-14, 6:35, 6:47-51, 10:7-10, and 14:6. What is the only thing that can ultimately satisfy the desires of our heart? How do we get it?
4. Read Study Deeper.
 - a. When you think about your prayer life, do come honestly before the Lord or do you see the struggle to want to get it together and "get cleaned up" before you come?
 - b. What did you learn about what it means to "lament" as a believer?
 - c. How does this encourage you to be more honest with your prayers?
5. Read Romans 8:14-39.
 - a. How does the apostles Paul describe life in a post-Genesis 3 world? How do we both personally feel and experientially see in the world around us that this is a broken, fallen world?
 - b. What sources of encouragement does Paul give?
 - c. What must be true of us for these promises to apply to us?
 - d. Which promise or encouraging truth to you find most meaningful for your current circumstances and why?
 - e. Who do you know that could use some encouragement? How can you reach out to them to share the good news found in these verses? Don't wait; act now!

Challenge: This week, as you realize unmet expectations, disappointments, and unfulfilled desires note how you respond? Do you move towards God in prayer? Or do you find yourself trying to fix it all yourself? Commit to bringing these honestly before the Lord each day seeking peace not in the answers, but in His presence.

Prayer: Dear God,

Our world is hurting and broken. Our world is full of disappointment, pain, and heartbreak. We know that in whatever we face, you are our Peace and Refuge, a very present help in times of trouble. Thank you that you remind us throughout your Word, we do not face the storms alone, but you are always with us. Whispering calm. Speaking peace. Bringing rest to our souls.

We confess our need for you. We ask you to forgive us for trying to figure everything out on our own, for not trusting that you are more than able and powerful to work on our behalf. Forgive us for picking back up what we already determined to lay down at your feet. Give us the ability to trust you more, give us a heart that finds rest in your presence, give us the wisdom to seek peace and pursue it, remembering it's only to be found in you alone.

Thank you that your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Thank you that you care for us. Thank you that the peace of your loving and strong presence guards and protects our hearts and minds in you. Thank you that we do not have to walk in fear or live in overwhelmed cycles of worry and stress.

Thank you for your voice that breaks through the greatest wind and storm swirling around us, and whispers "Peace, be still."

Thank you that you sent your One and Only Son to set us free.

In the Mighty Name of Jesus,
Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

Lament Like a Christian Hedonist - How Joy in God Bears Real Pain

If God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him, then Christians have every reason to be the happiest people in the world. But does that leave us with one-dimensional emotions? How should believers act and feel when surrounded by brokenness and sin?

The Bible teaches us that we have many reasons to mourn. We mourn the sin in our lives (Romans 7:15–20) and the brokenness of this present evil age (Galatians 1:4). We mourn while we wait for Christ to return and make all things right. Following Christ’s ascension, the church laments because her bridegroom has been taken away (Matthew 9:15). Even the glorified martyrs in the book of Revelation, who have already been given white robes of victory, mourn as they still are waiting and longing for justice (Revelation 6:9–11). “Blessed are those who mourn,” Jesus taught, “for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

“Claiming that God is ignorant of evil creates far more problems than it solves.” Tweet Share on Facebook

The Bible calls us to be “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). But often that tension seems impossible for our hearts. Our emotions can feel too rigid, slow, and clumsy to obey those words. Is there a way to make our hearts more agile, more ready to navigate this disorienting world?

During disorienting times, believers face two distinct temptations. Succumbing to either of these will drain our courage and damage our witness. But God has provided a path between these temptations that lifts our eyes to him and buoys our hearts with faith.

Tempted to Limit God

Sometimes we are tempted to respond to difficult circumstances by limiting God. This approach looks for an alibi for God when we witness evil in the world. We are tempted to say that God is not strong enough to do anything about the difficult circumstances we face.

Troubled by the evil they see in the world, some people limit God by claiming he does not know the future. They teach that God can’t foreknow the decisions of people until those people create their decisions.

Sadly, though, claiming that God is ignorant of evil creates far more problems than it solves. When human choices rule over God, then humanity’s hope for the future can only be other future human choices. And the Bible insists that our rescue requires far greater force than that.

Tempted to Downplay Our Pain

The prophet Isaiah warns us, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20). Sometimes those who treasure the sovereignty of God can be cruel to sufferers. Their words, however good-intentioned, downplay the hardship or offense. These words often land on hurting ears as glib and banal clichés. Call evil what it is: evil.

“God is who he says he is, and he does what he says he will do. Pray his promises back to him.”

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We also downplay the evil in our world when we treat it merely as a lesson. Learn from the foolishness of Job’s friends and the foolishness of Jesus’s disciples (John 9:2). God’s word gives us glimpses of insights about his broad purposes, but we should not speculate much about God’s specific reasons for intending a particular instance of suffering after the fact.

The surest indication that you have succumbed to either of these two temptations is fatalism – you give up. If we have limited God (our first temptation), then we have no reason to call on him. If we’ve downplayed the evil circumstances (our second temptation), we try to solve the problem ourselves, but the magnitude of the problem leads to burnout, then surrender.

True evil – the sin in each of us – is far too great a problem to be solved by natural means. It calls for a supernatural rescue.

Path of Lament

Instead of giving up, believers ought to walk the path of lament. The Bible shows us many examples of what that looks like. Consider three.

First, pray God’s promises back to him (like Psalm 94:14–15). By definition, believers have high expectations of God. And why do we have high expectations of him? Because he has given us lavish promises. When we pray his promises back to him, it is not complaining. God is who he says he is, and he does what he says he will do. When we call upon our God to keep his promises, we praise his loving and active excellencies.

Second, confess the mystery (like Job 42:1–6). For example, God is a loving and good Father and we are his beloved children. And yet his discipline of us does not feel pleasant, but painful (Hebrews 12:11). How can this be, that our loving Father’s interaction with us hurts?

God has his own perspective. And that perspective is a divine perspective – eternal and omniscient. Our perspective is necessarily far more limited. Not only are we limited to our own two eyes, but we also have further limitations from the damage of our sin. So it ought not surprise

us that many of the greatest realities in this universe are mysterious to us, little as we are. And God loves us enough to remind us of just how little we can see now.

God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him, especially in the midst of real grief and loss. Tweet Share on Facebook

Third, wrestle hard with your hardships (like Psalm 88:10–14). Because Christians believe God’s word and trust God’s promises, we can ask God some painfully raw questions. These questions of lament can take the form of mourning (Psalm 137), complaint (Psalm 142), and even protest (Habakkuk 1).

This is not humanistic therapy that views being angry at God as a good thing. Because only God is gloriously omniscient, only he can answer our “why” questions. Because only God is gloriously omnipotent, only he can answer our pleas for deliverance. Lament is God’s people desperately crying in faith to their Lord until God shows himself to be the faithful one he has promised to be.

Lament acknowledges that Jesus was right when he said, “In the world you will have tribulation.” And then lament fills us with Christ’s hope: “Take heart,” he said, “I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lament-like-a-christian-hedonist>