



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

### Shattered Expectations

When life goes to pieces | Part 1

Tim Badal | September 27, 2015 | 1 Samuel 1:1–20



Open your Bible to the book of 1 Samuel. This is the first sermon in a new series we've entitled "Shattered" with the subtitle "When life goes to pieces." We'll be looking at this theme in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. We're going to spend a good amount of time focused on this theme of shattered—looking at lives that, for whatever reason, fell apart as things didn't turn out the way people had expected. We'll devote our time and attention to look at some of the most heartbreaking and difficult passages about people's lives in all of Scripture.

First Samuel takes place during a difficult time for the nation of Israel. God's chosen people were being led by a group of judges. They didn't have a king or a president or a ruler whom they could look to and say, "That's our guy." This group of judges led them, some of whose names we know, like Gideon, Samson or Deborah. These judges led during a period of time that spanned a couple hundred years when the people of Israel found themselves very different from every other nation.

We know that Israel did have a King whose name was God because He had announced to them that He was going to be their Ruler and King. But during that time many Israelites were not content with that. They wanted to be like the other countries and nations that surrounded them who had kings to lead the people. So during this time there were judges who led the nation of Israel.

We are told at the end of the book of Judges that this was a time when everyone did was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). It doesn't sound much different than our day and age when everyone thinks they are able to define what truth is and what's right for them. If it's right for them then it must be right. As a result of this mindset all kinds of chaos and heartbreak are taking place.

You may ask the question, "Why are we focusing our time and attention here? Why would we devote so much time to such a broken and messy book of the Bible?" The reason we look at 1 Samuel is that it's in the Bible and we are told to look at all of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). We don't just look at the pretty parts of the Bible but also the difficult parts that may be hard to work through, hard to preach, and hard to explain. This is part of Scripture and we are dedicated to preaching the Scriptures.

To be more specific, I see three reasons for studying this book:

1. We preach the book 1 Samuel because it reminds us that we are all broken. Maybe you came in today wearing your best clothes and looking good, thinking, "I'm doing pretty well right now." I want to remind you that no matter where you are, if you were born of a mom and dad in the human race you're a broken individual. You're broken. I'm broken. We all have issues. We have idiosyncrasies that cause us to have all kinds of troubles.

Some of us have made decisions and had things impact our lives in negative ways. Because of that we walk around as broken people. We need to recognize that some of the best people God had working in His ministry were very broken and flawed people.

2. Each time we read one of these stories about these ugly, messy, shattered lives it reminds us that God is the answer to our problems. More money is not going to fix our problems. A new spouse isn't going to fix our problems. Obedient children are not going to fix our problems. That new promotion, that new car, that new house or those new clothes will

not take care of the problems. Only God through Jesus Christ can. First Samuel will remind us that if we try to fix our lives on our own we're going to fail.

3. People make very sinful and bad decisions throughout Scripture and we're going to learn not to make those same mistakes. Some of us may be living in similar situations that are going on in 1 Samuel. We need to be reminded of what we ought not to be involved in, decisions we shouldn't be making, and the importance of turning to God and seeking His wisdom instead of trying to pursue our own thinking and wisdom in these particular situations.

Each week we're going to deal with a shattered issue. This week we're going to address shattered expectations. Next week we're going to look at shattered parenting. The following week we'll look at shattered religion. We'll learn how God takes that which is shattered and makes masterpieces out of it.

Turn to 1 Samuel 1:1-20:

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. <sup>2</sup>He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

<sup>3</sup>Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. <sup>4</sup>On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup>And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup>So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup>And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup>After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup>She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup>And she vowed a vow and said, "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, and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup>As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. <sup>14</sup>And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." <sup>15</sup>But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." <sup>17</sup>Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." <sup>18</sup>And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

<sup>19</sup>They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup>And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."

Picture with me a beautiful little girl, eight or nine years old, who is out with some friends in the hill country of a beautiful land. They're talking about meeting Mr. Right, falling in love and getting married. I wonder if Hannah was talking with her friends one day about what she was looking forward to because that's what young girls do many times. They talk about the future and the homes they look forward to making. They look forward to the opportunity of raising children and the joy that comes from being part of a growing family. I wonder if Hannah had an expectation of what her husband would be like and what married life would be like. I wonder if she dreamed about what it would be like to be the apple of her husband's eye and to see his face light up with joy whenever she walked into the room as he thought, "There's my girl." I wonder if she dreamed about what it would be like to hold a newborn baby that was a gift from God for her to have and to hold and to raise in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Even though we are separated from Hannah by time and culture, no doubt she had expectations as many of us do. We have the expectation that when we grow old our lives will be like a fairy tale and we'll all live happily ever after. But when we come to books like 1 Samuel we learn that life is not a fairy tale. Everything doesn't always turn out nice. We're not able to wrap our lives into a beautiful package with a beautiful bow on top where everything is perfect. When we look at Hannah's life we see things didn't go as she probably would have dreamed as a little girl. We learn that life is going to be hard. It's going to be ugly. It will be filled with jealousy and rivalry. It's going to be filled with a sense that something's always lacking in her life.

As we begin this series and look at Hannah's life, we are reminded of an important truth. If you've lived on this earth long enough you'll know this truth: if we're going to get through shattered expectations as Hannah did, we need to remember that life can be very frustrating. No one, including God, guarantees that this life is going to be easy. The Bible says, "*But man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). Just as every time you start a fire you see the sparks and smoke heading up to the sky, so your life

is given to troubles. In this world we're going to have times when we'll be frustrated and broken. Things we expect to happen will not take place. In fact many times, the very things we expect to happen will turn out to be the very opposite.

We see this in the life of Hannah. Early in her life Hannah was dreaming about how life would end up, only to find those expectations and dreams were not just unmet but shattered. It's almost like someone was playing a cruel joke on her. Some of you find yourself sitting in Hannah's position. Maybe you're not struggling in the same way Hannah did but maybe some of you are thinking of those days when you dreamed about a marriage filled with romance and commitment. Maybe that dream has been shattered because you haven't found that certain someone. Or maybe you're in a marriage that you had hoped would be so great and wonderful, the answer to all of your pains and sorrows, but it is now filled with coldness, betrayal, anger and maybe even abuse.

Others of you have dreamed about the joy of a career that would give you purpose in life and an opportunity to change the world. You thought you would make all sorts of money and have an opportunity to be stretched in ways you never thought possible, only to find yourself now in a dead-end job that's paying very little.

How about students who work all night to get the grades they need so that they can apply to the school they want to go to, and believe God wants them to go to, only to find out that they have not been chosen.

What parent doesn't look to the great days ahead as you hold that newborn baby for the first time in the hospital? They're all going to be presidents, or great ballet dancers, or great major league baseball players. We've got great dreams and expectations for our kids only to find out as time goes on that we have a child who makes us want to pull our hair out. Or maybe a child who is struggling deeply with social issues or medical issues. Where once you imagined a bright future for that child now you're just hoping to get through life and maintain your relationship.

Many of you have had plans for a bright future. You had ideas of what retirement might look like only to wrestle with a diagnosis of cancer or some other debilitating disease that came out of nowhere. You expected a long life with a spouse, but now that may be in question. Maybe even worse, you've suffered an untimely death or loss of someone you loved which you were not expecting.

Whatever your struggle is we as human beings have expectations. The Bible doesn't talk about dreaming or expecting, but I've got to believe it's part of God's will for us because He gave us the ability to do it. As long as it stays within some level of reality, dreaming and expecting isn't all that bad. The things that Hannah was dreaming about, the things maybe you're dreaming about and hoping will come to fruition, probably aren't all that bad. They may even be incredibly noble things. But what are we to do with those things when they're shattered and don't turn out the way that we hoped?

## **1. Remember That Life Can Be Very Frustrating**

We have one of two options. It has been said that crisis tends to move us in one of two ways: toward God or toward bitterness. In your shattered expectations are you being moved toward God or are you being moved toward bitterness? In this world we have times that are incredibly frustrating. Life is going to be frustrating. The question is what are we going to do when those frustrating times come? Let's understand what Hannah did. Let's understand a little bit about what was going on in her life.

### **Empty**

Frustrating times come when we feel empty. What went wrong for this little girl who no doubt dreamed and expected great things for her adult life? In verses one and two we are told some basic information about her husband, Elkanah—the man of her dreams. Barrenness was the first problem that Hannah faced. Then we see in verse two another frustrating problem: Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah didn't. Even before the second wife was introduced, barrenness was something that Hannah would have to confront.

Barrenness is something that is never celebrated. I don't know of any woman who has held a barren party. "I'm so excited! I'm going to invite my friends and family to celebrate that I can't have kids!" Being barren isn't fun. It's a reminder for the women struggling with it that something is wrong. Things aren't working as they should.

Centuries ago there was no medical advice that could explain this; there were no procedures that could be done. No doubt this is something Hannah came to realize after many failed attempts. Think of the frustration and emptiness. There's no diagnosis.

"I'm sorry but something in your reproductive organs isn't working quite right. We've figured it out and here's the bad news." She doesn't get any of that. She doesn't have any symptoms to indicate a problem. The Bible says the Lord closed her womb (verse five). She's not having kids. The hope that something will take place is left empty after many failed attempts.

Likewise when we have expectations of something taking place—whether in our marriages, our work lives, our families, or our personal lives—when it doesn't happen we are left empty-handed. Hannah was at that place as well. This wasn't something she dealt with for just a couple of days. She dealt with this problem year after year. She was left empty handed.

## Exasperated

This issue of having shattered expectations will leave you exasperated. It wasn't bad enough that she was left without children but her husband goes and does something stupid. Yes, it was culturally okay for a man to take a second wife. There's no way we can get around that, but it was never affirmed or prescribed in Scripture. From the beginning God had planned, willed and ordained that a marriage relationship is to happen between one man and one woman for a lifetime. Jesus speaks about that in Matthew 19 when speaking about divorce and the permanency of marriage. But in the Old Testament God overlooked sins of ignorance, both with men like Abraham and men like Elkanah. So her husband did what was culturally okay for the time but against God's divine order.

Was Elkanah a good husband? He worshiped God and it says he loved his wives. If you ever take on a second wife you're never a good husband. He may have gotten some good marks in some areas but he had blown it in a big area. He missed it. So he takes a second wife.

This is where the writer of Samuel gives us some information we need to be aware of: verse two says he had two wives and in Old Testament Hebrew writing any time you see two or more things being talked about, the one listed first has prominence. So Hannah was the first wife. "*The name of the one was Hannah...*" Then the second wife was Peninnah.

What does that mean? Why is that so important? Talk about shattered expectations! You marry a guy and you have the expectation you're going to live happily ever after and that everything will turn out well. Then month after month you show that you cannot conceive a child. So the husband makes a decision. Picture with me for a moment how this conversation might have taken place: They're at the dinner table and Elkanah clears his throat and says, "Hannah, I need to talk to you about something. We haven't been successful in having a child and having children is important to me. I've come up with an idea. I want to introduce you to my new wife. She's going to live with us, too." You know that's not going to go over very well with the first wife. "We're going to try to have kids because it isn't happening with you." Do you think Hannah was frustrated? Do you think she was brokenhearted?

Shattered expectations destroy us.

The moment Peninnah enters the picture she becomes Fertile Myrtle. Kids start coming one after the other. Notice in verse four that he gives a portion of the sacrifice to Peninnah and all her sons and daughters—there's a multitude of them!

Think about the exasperation Hannah was feeling. First there was the exasperation that she can't have a child. Then there was exasperation that she now had a rival and there was another woman in her husband's life. Then this other woman had many children. Every cry of a baby, every time she would see Peninnah holding a child, every time she would see her husband Elkanah playing with one of his children was a reminder that she was a failure. Some of us are walking around and everywhere we look and everywhere we go is a reminder that our lives are utter failures. Everything we expected has been thrown out the door.

As if it couldn't get any worse, in verse seven we are told that Peninnah started mocking Hannah. It wasn't enough that she had all the children, and that she had been able to do something with her husband that Hannah couldn't do, so she began to mock her incessantly. The idea here is to do something to bring someone to wrath. It started out with small things like some passive-aggressiveness on Peninnah's part. Then the incessant talking of the joy of kids became more overt and the rude comments started. She might have said, "Something is wrong with you, woman. You're cursed by God. Look at me! I'm being blessed by God with these children. God has cursed you. You have done something wrong."

The irony of all of this is that Hannah, a woman who was fit to be a mother, had no children and Peninnah, a woman who seems unkind and unsympathetic, was able to have all the kids she wanted. Isn't that what happens with shattered expectations? We look around and the pagans seem to have everything. Let's be honest. We work our tails off, we serve God, we honor Him, we give back to the Lord and it seems as if we can't catch a break. Then the people who don't go to church, and don't love Jesus, and live in total contradiction to the Scriptures have everything going for them. We're left empty-handed.

## Exhausted

This leads us to a place of exhaustion. Verse seven says this happened year after year. There's something exhausting about the issue of infertility. If you've ever struggled with infertility you know this to be true. Every month there's an expectation that something good is going to happen and every month your heart is broken. "Well, maybe next month." I wonder if Hannah, on her knees, begged her husband, "Give me one more month! One more month and it will happen. I promise you! I know it's going to happen. It feels different than it did before. Please give me one more chance." The exhaustion that must come from that! There's constantly new heartbreak and emotional toil.

When shattered expectations come we are left empty, exasperated and exhausted. That's what Hannah felt.

## 2. Resist the Temptation to Fix Things

So what do we do? We need to beware of something that we are so prone to do—we need to resist the temptation to fix things. When your life isn't what you want it to be, the natural human reaction is to think, "I need to fix it. I need to right this wrong. I need to address this situation with my own hands." As human beings we are prone to fix our problems. We figure if we try hard enough—if we throw enough money, time and energy at something—then it will change. If we just take things into our own hands they'll change. The problem is when we try to fix things that are in God's hands a couple of things take place.

### We fall short of addressing the problem

Enter the husband, Elkanah. He seemed to be a good man. He had two wives but he seemed to love and worship God and he loved Hannah. His attempts to alleviate the pain seemingly fell on deaf ears. His wife was barren and she was so troubled that she *"wept and would not eat"* (verse seven). You think she had a problem? She was weeping all the time and not eating. It doesn't help that her rival was mocking her incessantly. So now we see her husband (with two wives). He said, "Hannah, don't be sad. Remember that when we go to the temple and I give portions to all of Peninnah's sons and daughters, don't I give you two portions? Shouldn't that make you happy? Shouldn't that fix the problem? Why are you crying, woman? Rejoice and be glad! I'm a generous husband. I love you and you got two portions of the goat. I'll even let you pick what parts you get. It's a good day."

Second scene: Elkanah entered again. Hannah was weeping. His other wife was hassling her. He tried to alleviate the situation. Verse eight says, *"Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad?"* These are all great questions. He should have just stopped there and listened to his wife. That's not what he did though. He said, *"Am I not more to you than ten sons?"* What does he do? "You've got me!" Are you kidding me? She's weeping and not eating. She's downtrodden. Her rival, his second wife, is mocking her because she doesn't have a child. Elkanah thought he could fix that.

This is a reminder for us when we walk and talk with people who are living lives of shattered expectations. Don't ever think that your little words of advice can fix it. Early on in my ministry as a pastor I had an answer for everything. As I grow older and I'm now in the second decade of my ministry, often the best pastoral ministry I can do is just to weep with people who weep. The best thing I can do is look into people's eyes and say, "I don't know why."

I don't understand why Hannah, a godly and faithful woman who would make a great mother, didn't have children while her rival who was unscrupulous in every way had a bevy of them all around her. I don't know why. I don't know why bad things happen to seemingly good people. Words won't fix it. We are told that Hannah went into the temple and she began to pray. She was praying silently but she was pretty animated. So much so that Eli the priest, who was watching her, saw that she wasn't speaking out loud but she was incredibly animated while she was praying. She was weeping and filled with great vexation (verse 16). It says she spoke out of her anxiety. Eli said, "Are you drunk, woman?" Why did he think she was drunk? Because that's what people did back then and that's what people do now when their expectations are shattered. We turn to a bottle, or a drug, or something that will make us feel a little better.

We need to be careful because Hannah reminds us that even in our times of great anxiety and vexation, turning to a bottle doesn't fix it. She says, "I'm not drunk! I'm brokenhearted." While she wasn't given to that, I know I'm speaking to several people who, when expectations are shattered, turn to other things. No doubt there are some here who struggle with alcohol. Even within the church alcoholism is a problem. Some of you are turning to the spirits of liquor to drown out your sorrow. It makes you feel a little better. Some of you are dealing with illegal drugs. Some of you are putting a heavy dependence on prescribed

drugs. "I've got to take my little pill because it makes me feel better and allows me to cope with my shattered expectations. Things didn't turn out the way I wanted them to but if I take my pill everything will be fine."

While there is a place for medication (please don't miss what I'm saying here), if that is your savior then you've got a problem. If that's what is filling your life with joy, you've got a problem. Some of us do it in more Christian ways. We allow our minds to be filled with all kind of fantasy of what life could be like. We covet others when we see their picture-perfect lives. We drown ourselves in television and books, dreaming about what life could be like. For many, heartbreak and shattered expectations leave us wanting and we go about trying to fill our lives with other things to cope and to alleviate the pain. Hannah reminds us that we should not do it that way. So what do we do?

### 3. Remain Faithful Even When it Hurts

Hannah didn't try to fix her problem on her own. She didn't look to other things to try and alleviate the pain. Life isn't going the way you want it to? Maybe you find yourself thinking that life isn't what it was meant to be. My grandfather used to say shattered expectations are when you live life on the first floor of a two-story outhouse. It's not fun. It's not a place you want to be. It feels as if everything is not going your way.

#### Suffer like a good soldier

So what does the Christian do in those moments? In your moments of shattered expectation, suffer hardship like a good soldier. Second Timothy 2:3 says, "*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*" Soldiers are sometimes given missions they don't like. Their job isn't to quit, or to give up and say, "I don't want to do that. You can't make me." A soldier bucks up and says, "This isn't the mission I was looking for but I will endure this hardship because I've been called as a soldier to do so."

Whatever shattered expectation you're dealing with, before you try to fix it, recognize that God may be giving you this struggle for you to suffer. Why in the world would a loving God want you to suffer? Because God knows that suffering brings us to our knees.

Every time of growth in my life has always started at a place of suffering. If I look back at the key moments of my 39 years on this earth, every moment that has been life-changing for me has had a point of suffering. I'll be honest with you: if it hasn't involved suffering it hasn't changed my life. God knows that suffering works.

We hate suffering as American Christians. I can't stand a lot of our Christian movies because in every one of them everything finishes up great in the end. "If you do this you get the new truck." "If you do this you'll have babies." "If you do this, that will happen." "My goodness, I want Jesus! Everything works out in the end." Well, when I read the Bible everything doesn't always work out in the end. God says some of the best people in the world are people who have suffered greatly.

God uniquely gives us experiences of suffering so that we become more like Him. Let's remember Whom we worship and praise: a Suffering Servant. We are called to share in His sufferings so that we may one day share in His resurrection and glory (1 Peter 4:13). Don't be so quick to alleviate the pain.

Earlier this year, we did not quickly tell a lot of people about Amanda's cancer because we knew the outpouring of love from our church, family and friends would be something that we'd never experienced in our lives. I remember wanting that so badly but also recognizing and asking the Lord, "What do you want us to suffer? What do you want us to learn from this? Before we announce it to everybody, what do you want to teach us? Before the clamor of love and support that people will give us, what do you have in this moment?"

I was reminded of this truth at Thomas Fatorma's funeral. At one point his wife was crying out because of the loss of her husband. Ladies began to come around and console her, but her Liberian pastor said, "Stop. Let her cry out to the Lord, because she is drawing closer to her Savior than she ever would in times of plenty."

Don't be quick to push off your suffering. In those moments God draws closest to you. God gives you tears. God gives you the ability to cry with all your lungs because He wants you to do that at times. David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), did a lot of crying. He had lots of times of anxiety and vexation when he didn't push off the suffering but took it and learned from it. You suffer hardship like a good soldier. Life isn't easy and God may have given you this suffering for a reason.

## Be honest about your heartbreak

In verses eight, ten and 15 we see Hannah being honest about her pain. She was broken in private. She was broken in front of her family. She was broken in front of strangers. She was broken in places where she shouldn't be broken—like the church. Isn't that where you clean yourself up and go before the priest and say, "I'm fine. You're fine. We're all fine." Isn't that what we do here in America? No, Hannah is honest here.

"Hannah, how's life going?" "It's terrible! I don't have kids. Don't women want kids? I don't have them. I can't eat. I can't sleep. My husband is sleeping with another woman. She's having lots of kids."

Let's just be real here. How are you doing? Be honest about your heartbreak. Use wisdom and integrity in your speech but be honest about it. "How's life going?" "It's terrible. I'm in a dead-end job. My boss hates me. I can't ever make him happy. My kids aren't living for the Lord. They don't want anything to do with their mom and me. I've got problems. I don't have any money. I have nothing. I was hoping life would be a lot better and it's terrible right now." Be honest about your heartbreak. God wants to hear it and other Christians should want to as well.

## Leave it and let God work it out

Verse 18 says she made her petition before the Lord and, after she heard from the priest, she left it in God's hands. She was no longer downtrodden. She cleaned her face, got back to what she was supposed to be doing and never brought it up again. It was in the Lord's hands.

Some of you need to stop and say, "God, I know You know about this heartache but I want to verbalize it to You. I'm struggling. I'm going to put it in Your hands. I don't know what You're going to do with it, but I'm going to leave it there and let You work it out." Leave it and let God work it out.

## See God's sovereignty amidst the storm

Who's to blame for all of this? Is Hannah to blame? No. Is Elkanah to blame? No. Is Peninnah to blame? No. God is to blame. Twice in this passage we see that the one who is to blame for this trial and tribulation is God. The Lord closed her womb. Who did it? The Lord did it. You don't think the Lord could fix her problem? Yes, He could have. The first month that she didn't get pregnant God could have taken care of it, but He didn't. God had a plan. God is sovereign.

Maybe you're thinking, "I don't get it. Why is this happening?" Maybe because God in His infinite judgment and wisdom said, "It is good for My child to endure this. It may be for a season, for some years, or maybe your entire life." God has the ability and the right to do that in our lives.

Remember this: in those moments God will feel very far from you. But look at 1 Samuel 1:1: *"There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite."* He knew who he was and what he was doing. If you think God doesn't know your hurts and pains, He does. He knows the number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30). He knows everything about you. He knows when you get up and when you go to bed (Psalm 139:2). He knows your struggles. He knows your pains. He knows your anxieties. God is there and He reminds you that He will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). You have got a sovereign God. He allows things in your life for your good. It may look like chaos.

I had an aunt who used to make beautiful pictures with needlepoint. As I was sitting on the ground I would ask, "What are you doing?" She would say, "I'm making a picture." I would say, "It looks pretty junky from down here." I was looking at the bottom side and saw all the frayed edges and knots.

Sometimes God is doing this needlepoint picture. From earth's perspective we look up and it's all frayed and knotted. We think, "What are You doing?" And God says, "You're not looking at it from My perspective." Remember God's sovereignty.

## Trust His lordship no matter how it turns out

Your life may not turn out any better than it is today. Your husband or wife may never change. Your children may wander far from God. You may die in that dead-end job. You may never have money. Your cancer may never go away. Whatever it is, your life may be the same ten years from now as it is today. But here's the thing: trust the Lord. Trust that He does all things well. Trust Him when your rivals mock you. Trust Him when people hurt you with great painful blows. Trust God and endure the

hardships that may come your way even though you're His child. Know that He loves you, He is with you, and He will see you through to the end. Trust Him and obey Him with all your life.

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