

TRY IT ON

WHAT FITS MY GRIEF?

The Grieving of Hannah

Some features to help you determine if you want to *TRY ON* the grief because the circumstances are similar to your own:

- Inability to have a child
- Anticipated attacks by family
- Being treated differently by others
- Misunderstood by others
- Being provoked consistently
- Enduring hardship for a long time

Some feelings to help you determine if you want to *TRY ON* the grief because the emotions are similar to your own:

- Sadness
- Bitterness
- Shame
- Distress
- Envy
- Anger
- Overlooked
- Misunderstood

A summary of what happened:

Despite living in the hills with her husband, Elkanah, Hannah saw her husband's other wife, Peninah, have many children. Hannah's husband gave gifts to these children and his other wife but treated Hannah differently. This other wife provoked Hannah into expressing her anger frequently. Hannah was constantly irritated by her situation. When they went to festivals each year, Hannah refused to eat or drink but instead prayed. Because she fasted while others feasted, Hannah's husband asked her why she was behaving like this and why she did not view him as more valuable than the children she did not have. Hannah left and wept heavily; she offered desperate prayers to God and offered to take a vow if God answered her prayer. She prayed so earnestly that despite her mouth moving, no sound or voice came out. Noticing this (and perhaps her for the first time), the religious leader, Eli, accused Hannah of being drunk with wine. Hannah denied this accusation. She was distressed, not drunk. She was writhing, not wicked. She was begging, not babbling. Hannah declared herself to be a fellow servant and asked that she might find favor. After praying to God, Hannah ate and went home.

A decorative header featuring a dark blue background with various geometric shapes in white and light blue. The shapes include rectangles, squares, circles, triangles, and lines, some of which are outlined or filled with a lighter shade of blue.

Some of the actions of Hannah that you can *TRY ON* to see if any fit you well:

- **Express anger** - Getting angry can be a way not only to express pain but to let others know when comments and actions cause pain. It's common to try calming exercises (like breathing) when you feel angry, which is more a way to control anger, but not express it. Try something that expresses your anger, such as making loud noises, crying, engaging in intense physical activity, or other actions that maintain safety.
- **Moan or groan** - Sometimes you will not have words for your situation. Try groaning or moaning. Use your voice to make noise as loud or as quiet as you prefer. Often, grief does not have words, rather it is guttural, a deep inner cry.
- **Make a vow** - It is not necessary to barter with God for what you want, but expressing a desire to give God something valuable in return for God giving you what you desire can be a way for you to express how serious you are. Sometimes giving up meals or treasures or favorite activities can be a part of the vow. Fasting can communicate the degree of your desire. Allow God to reject or accept your proposal, and follow through with promises made.
- **Pray silently** - Sometimes the depth of emotion keeps words from being formed or produced. Allow the groans or anguish to be the prayer without forcing words to come.
- **Eat** - During times of grief or after long sessions of weeping, eating can be helpful. Eating does not mean that you have moved on or forgotten your pain. Eating is important for strength and endurance. Eating can be a way to have energy for moving on or to have sustenance for staying in the sadness.

Some of the phrases of Hannah that you can **TRY ON** to see if any feel right for you:

- See my affliction.
- I want this more than food or drink.
- Please, God.
- If you answer, God, I will do something significant for you.
- I don't have words to express my anguish.
- I am not who you say I am.
- I pour out my soul to the LORD.
- I have a strong spirit.
- I have a complaint to God.
- I am grieving for what I do not have.
- Please, be favorable to me

Some ideas you can **TRY ON** with a child:

- **Rage** - Invite your child into a safe space where the child can express anger without hurting self or others.
 - Each house is different in what expressions of anger are tolerable vs which are not. Consider making house rules: "When I feel angry I can... but I can't ..." Remember, anger should never hurt others, hurt yourself, or hurt property.
 - Model how to handle anger by expressing out loud for your child to hear what you are doing to self-regulate. "I felt angry when the car pulled in front of me. I'm taking deep breaths to help me calm down." Or, "I felt angry when my friend wanted to talk about our situation. I had to clench my fists and release them before talking."
- **Talk about how much** - Have a hypothetical conversation where the child can express just how much the child values what the child does not have or no longer has.
 - Invite your child to complete the sentence: "I wish I had _____."
 - Complete this question and ask your child: "Do you wish you had it more than _____?"

- Be as silly or serious as connects with your child by mentioning toys, games, money, activities, etc.
- **Stay silent, pray silently** - If your child processes situations silently, do not force your child to use words for communication. Remain silent with your child as long as your child needs or wants. Express to your child that silence is fine. Pray silently for yourself and your child during these times of silence, and affirm the silent prayers your child makes as well.
- **Feast together** - Ask your child what foods would be nice to share together. Eat together and encourage the child to talk about whatever comes to mind during the meal.

A summary of what happens next:

In her prayers, Hannah made a vow to God. Hannah promised to give to God her first child as a religious leader, a Nazarite, who would serve God and God's people. When the religious leader, Eli, heard from Hannah that she was not drunk but earnestly praying to God, he told her to go in peace and that God would give her what she desired. Hannah did have a child, and she fulfilled her vow by bringing her firstborn son to the worship space so that he could serve God. Hannah composed a song of thanksgiving to God that has inspired many over the years, including her son who became a prophet, judge, and leader of God's people.

Where to find the *Grieving of Hannah*:

1 Samuel 1