

Alone in the crowd
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Have you ever had it where you were surrounded by people, yet you felt alone? I think throughout our lives, we all experience that from time to time. In 1 Samuel 1, the biblical character, Hannah, certainly felt that way. 1 Samuel 1 is one of those chapters in the Bible that features a lot of those hard to pronounce names all in one place. In just the first 3 verses of the chapter we hear about the likes of Elkanah, Jeroham, Elihu, Tohu, Zuph, Peninnah, Hophni, Phinehas and Eli. Well guess whose in the middle of all those names? Hannah's in the middle, yet she feels all alone. Hannah feels all alone for a variety of reasons. The first reason is because she is unable to have children. In a culture that placed so much value on preserving the family line, her inability stood out and she was saddened by it. Another reason she felt alone is that one of the people in that list of many names, Peninnah, was treating her poorly. She provoked her, irritated her and made fun of her because she could not have children. Even in that list of names, Eli, who was a priest, had misunderstood her at one point and was rather curt towards her. Her husband, Elkanah, also amongst the people around her, tried to console her, but his words just couldn't make her feel better. And so even amongst a crowd of people, she felt alone. And sometimes this is how we feel too.

Sometimes the crowd around us is full of caring people, like Elkanah, but with certain pain that we have inside, we can still feel all alone. Sometimes the crowd around us is comprised of people that provoke us, like Peninnah, and that pain inside is felt all the more. But even in our pain, and even when we feel all alone, the truth is, we are not alone. And deep down, Hannah knew that too. She knew that God was always with her and so she turned to God in prayer.

It describes Hannah's prayer as pouring out her soul. She told God how she felt, what she was wrestling with inside and asked Him for help. What's wonderful about the story is that after she had finished praying it says that she was no longer sad. That is very interesting because her situation hadn't really changed. She still didn't have any children and she still had to contend with Peninnah. And so we learn that sometimes just talking to God, regardless of the outcome, is all we need. I think that is a good reminder in this fresh New Year; the power of prayer.

We have access to the creator of the universe, whom we can listen to and speak to and be assured by that we are not alone. We can pour out our soul to a God that listens to His children praying. And so be encouraged today, that when we feel alone, even if it's amongst a crowd, we are never alone.