

Those Who Came Before

As we continue our *Call to Prayer*, we'll look at some Old Testament examples of prayer. These are taken from the lives of five people who lived at very different times in Israel's history, but who shared a faith in God. We have much to learn from them and their prayer lives.

Their names (and their meanings) are informative, too:

Solomon - derived from *shalom*, the Hebrew word for Peace.

Hannah - Favor, Grace

Jonah - Dove

Daniel - God is My Judge

Elijah - My God is Yahweh (Yahweh is God's personal name)

As you read about their lives and prayers, see if you can find a connection between the meaning of their name and some aspect of the prayer (its purpose, the setting, God's answer, etc.).

Monday – Solomon (Peace)

"Here, I believe is the key to understanding what is most personal in prayer. We do not pray to tell God what he does not know, nor to remind him of things he has forgotten. He already cares for the things we pray about.... He has simply been waiting for us to care about them with him." Tim Stafford

1. Please read 1 Kings 3:5-15. What were God and Solomon talking about? Would you have thought to answer God the way Solomon did?
2. Solomon could have asked for many things, but he chose to ask for wisdom. Why was the Lord so pleased with Solomon's request?

Text Insight – Verse 15 says this prayer occurred in a dream, but that doesn't mean it wasn't real. 1 Kings 10:23-25 and several other passages reveal the ways God answered Solomon's prayer.

Prayer Focus – Have you ever experienced an answered prayer like Solomon? Pray for God's wisdom, born out of a desire to serve him, and see how he answers you. In addition, pray for wisdom for those in leadership. Spend some time praying for our elected national and state leaders. Also pray for local officials (school principals, city council members, etc.).

Tuesday – Hannah (Favor, Grace)

"Biblical prayer is impertinent, persistent, shameless, indecorous. It is more like haggling in an outdoor bazaar than the polite monologues of the church." Walter Wink

1. Please read 1 Samuel 1:1-20. How long do you think Hannah wrestled with God in prayer over her concern? How long do you think it took for Hannah to realize God had answered it?
2. What was Eli's initial perception of Hannah? Have you ever been misunderstood when it comes to your spiritual life? How did you handle it? How did Hannah?

Prayer Focus – Pray for some things today that you have been praying about for a long time. Ask the Lord for the perseverance to pursue God's favor, just as Hannah persevered. Seek to wait patiently for his answer, just as Hannah waited.

Wednesday – Jonah (Dove)

"Most parents feel a pang when the child outgrows dependence, even while knowing the growth to be healthy and normal. With God, the rules change. I never outgrow dependence, and to the extent I think I do, I delude myself. Asking for help lies at the root of prayer... Prayer is a declaration of dependence upon God." Philip Yancey – Prayer

1. Please read Jonah 2:1-10. Under what circumstances did Jonah pray? How would you describe the thoughts and emotions that Jonah experienced?
2. In verse 8, Jonah makes an interesting discovery in the process of praying. What did Jonah discover?
3. What is Jonah's conclusion at the end of verse 9? How did Jonah come to such a conclusion?

Prayer Focus – Jonah ends his prayer by recognizing that God is the only true rescuer. Incorporate this truth, that salvation comes from the Lord, into your prayer today. Pray for the not-yet believers you know. Spend some time praying by name for individuals and families that need Christ, asking the Lord to remove the barriers and blindness that are preventing them from seeing the light of Christ.

Thursday – Daniel (God is My Judge)

1. Please read Daniel 6:1-28. What jumps out at you from reading this familiar story?
2. Daniel was opposed and persecuted because of his commitment to pray to the Lord. What kind of opposition have you experienced in prayer?
3. What was the nature of his prayers in verses 10-11? We usually cannot predict what crisis we will face next. How did Daniel's habit of regular prayer allow God to prepare him for whatever crisis came along?

Prayer Focus – Daniel regularly thanked God for what he was doing. Take time to thank the Father for sending his Son Jesus to become a sacrifice for your sins. Thank him for the other blessings that come to mind.

Friday – Elijah (My God is Yahweh)

1. Please read 1 Kings 18:16-39. What was Elijah facing when he prayed in verses 36-37? How did God answer in verse 38?
2. Elijah showed a stunning confidence that God would answer his prayer. Why do you think Elijah prayed with such boldness? Have you ever prayed that confidently? What might hold you back from such boldness?

Prayer Focus – Not every prayer is answered as immediately as Elijah's, but you might be surprised at God's timing in answering yours. Pray for something you are concerned about right now and wait to see God's response. It may come sooner than you think. Also, pray for the age-group ministries at FBC (Children's, Youth, and College ministries). Pray for the students and the leaders who lead those ministries.

For the Weekend: Review the lives and prayers of these Old Testament people, and pray through those attributes you would like to develop in your own life.