

# JOY

## EXPERIENCING JOY MINGLED WITH SORROW

“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing”

*PSALM 30:11 (ESV)*

### GRIEF AND SORROW

Grief is a powerful emotion bringing with it deep sorrow. Grief occurs when we experience the death of a loved one. Grief can also occur due to other types of loss. Maybe it's the loss of a career in which you once found your identity. Maybe it's the loss of a marriage you hoped would last a lifetime. Maybe it's the loss of a dream with the diagnosis of a child. No matter the cause, grief and sorrow can be overwhelming.

### JOY MINGLED WITH SORROW

How do we journey through grief and sorrow and integrate them into our lives? How can we begin healing and find the fullness of joy once again? Studies show that the practice of gratitude is effective at rewiring our brains. The practice of gratitude, or recalling the things that we are thankful for, on a daily basis has been shown to also increase serotonin and other feel-good neurotransmitters and hormones. However, the practice of gratitude alone cannot bring us out of the depths of sorrow. There is also healing power in lament. Lamenting, or a passionate expressing of grief or sorrow, is shown throughout the scriptures to lead to emotional processing and healing. There are many psalms of lament, like Psalm 77, which show that this is healthy, and that God does not shy away from our real and raw expressions of emotion. The entire book of Lamentations is devoted to this message. But the beautiful thing is that God has made us wonderfully complex with the capacity to feel both joy and sorrow in the same space. These two emotions are not mutually exclusive, and in life, joy is often mingled with sorrow.

### THE STORY OF HANNAH

In the book of Samuel, we meet a woman named Hannah. Hannah was grieved because she was unable to have a child. In the temple, she cried out to God pouring her heart out in prayer and vowed to the Lord that if he would give her a son, she would dedicate his life to God. She was so deeply sorrowful that Eli the priest, having seen her, thought that she was actually drunk rather than praying. When Eli realized her great sorrow, he proclaimed that God would grant her prayer. This promise was fulfilled and Hannah gave birth to a son and named him Samuel. When the child was still young Hannah fulfilled her promise to God and brought Samuel to be dedicated to the Lord as a priest. [1]

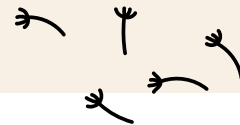
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[1] 1 Samuel Chapters 1-2 - New International Version (NIV)

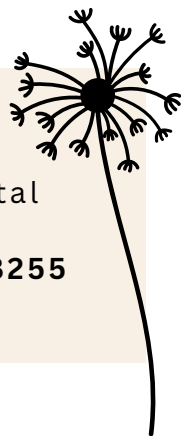
We may not give our child up to the priesthood like Hannah, but as parents caring for children with special needs, we absolutely give our child up to God on a daily if not hourly basis. If you have been on this journey for any length of time, it's clear that control is an illusion. We cannot control anything in our child's life and future and this has the potential to cause great grief and sorrow. However, it is possible to find joy mingled in the midst of that sorrow, because God is there in the midst and we can trust him completely just as Hannah did.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever struggled with grief and sorrow? If so, how did you find joy again?
2. Read Hannah's story (1 Samuel Chapters 1 and 2). What was the turning point from sorrow to joy for Hannah?
3. Have you ever experienced joy mingled with sorrow? Did it surprise you to feel these seemingly polar emotions at the same time? (read Psalm 77)
4. We have talked a little about the practice of gratitude and lament. Journaling is a wonderful way to express the emotions of sorrow and joy. Find some time this week to write out three things that are heavy on your heart and share them with the Lord in prayer. Then write out three things you are thankful for and give God thanks for these things in prayer.



**\*\* If you are struggling with anxiety or depression \*\*** please don't hesitate to reach out to a licensed counselor or therapist. Your mental and emotional health is just as important as your physical health.  
**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255**



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