

A Prayers in difficult times:

❖ **Elijah: Prayer in the midst of crisis**

- How does God answer our prayers in the midst of crisis?
 - (1) After a simple prayer from Elijah, God immediately responded with fire (1 Kings 18:36-38).
 - (2) After seven prayers asking for rain, God sent a small cloud that turned into a powerful storm (1 Kings 18:42-45).
 - (3) When Elijah asked for death, God remained silent, but sent his angel to feed him (1 Kings 19:4-8).
 - (4) Downcast in a cave, Elijah finally heard the voice of God answering his desperate prayer (1 Kings 19:9-18).
- One answer was immediate and miraculous. Another, after seven periods of prayer, sent the requested rain. Finally, after 40 days, a verbal and encouraging response. God knows how and when to answer in each of our situations.

❖ **Hannah: An answer that never comes**

- Hannah's prayer for a child seems like a prayer answered quickly by God (after nine months of joyful waiting, of course) (1 Sam. 1:9-20).
- However, when we read the previous verses, we observe that this answer took a very long time to arrive (1 Sam. 1:1-8).
- Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, had "children"—that is, more than one son—and "year by year" she irritated Hannah because God had not granted her children.
- From this point of view, how many years did Ana spend asking for a child without getting an answer?
- Sometimes, God's silence may be due to our selfishness (James 4:3); a cherished sin (Psalm 66:18); lack of faith (James 1:6); or, simply, it is not the right time.
- In any case, God sees the whole picture and knows what is best for us (Jer. 29:11). He will always answer, in His own time and in His own way, the prayer offered in faith (1 John 5:14-15).

B Model prayers:

❖ **Jesus: The content of prayer**

- Making long and elaborate prayers to impress and be praised by listeners is not the style of prayer that Jesus taught us (Mt. 6:5-8).
- Our prayers should be sincere and simple, in everyday language. Prayer is a vital part of our lives.

❖ **Daniel: The structure of prayer**

- The prayer recorded in Daniel 9:4-19 presents us with the four fundamental parts of prayer:
 - (1) Praise (Dan. 9:4)
 - (2) Confession and forgiveness (Dan. 9:5-15)
 - (3) Petitions (Dan. 9:16-19)
 - (4) Thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6)
- Daniel was interrupted by Gabriel before he could finish his prayer (thanksgiving).
- This pattern applies to both our private and public prayers. Obviously, the section on "confession and forgiveness" should be adapted to the context of prayer.
- This structure helps us to focus prayer on God, preventing it from becoming a kind of "shopping list" from the divine storehouse.

C Four questions about prayer

❖ **Why should we pray if God already knows everything?**

- Prayer lifts us to the throne of God and compels us to examine ourselves and re-evaluate our relationship with Him each day. Even if we don't know what to say, the Holy Spirit helps us (Rom. 8:26).

❖ **Why pray when everything is fine?**

- Angels who have not sinned worship God continually. How much more should we? To think we don't need God because everything is going well for us is pride.

❖ **With whom should I pray?**

- Depending on the moment: In solitude (this is when our prayer becomes more intimate); with family or in small groups; in church.

❖ **How should I listen?**

- The clearest and safest way to do this is to combine prayer with Bible study as part of our personal devotion, avoiding emptying our minds or just listening to ourselves.