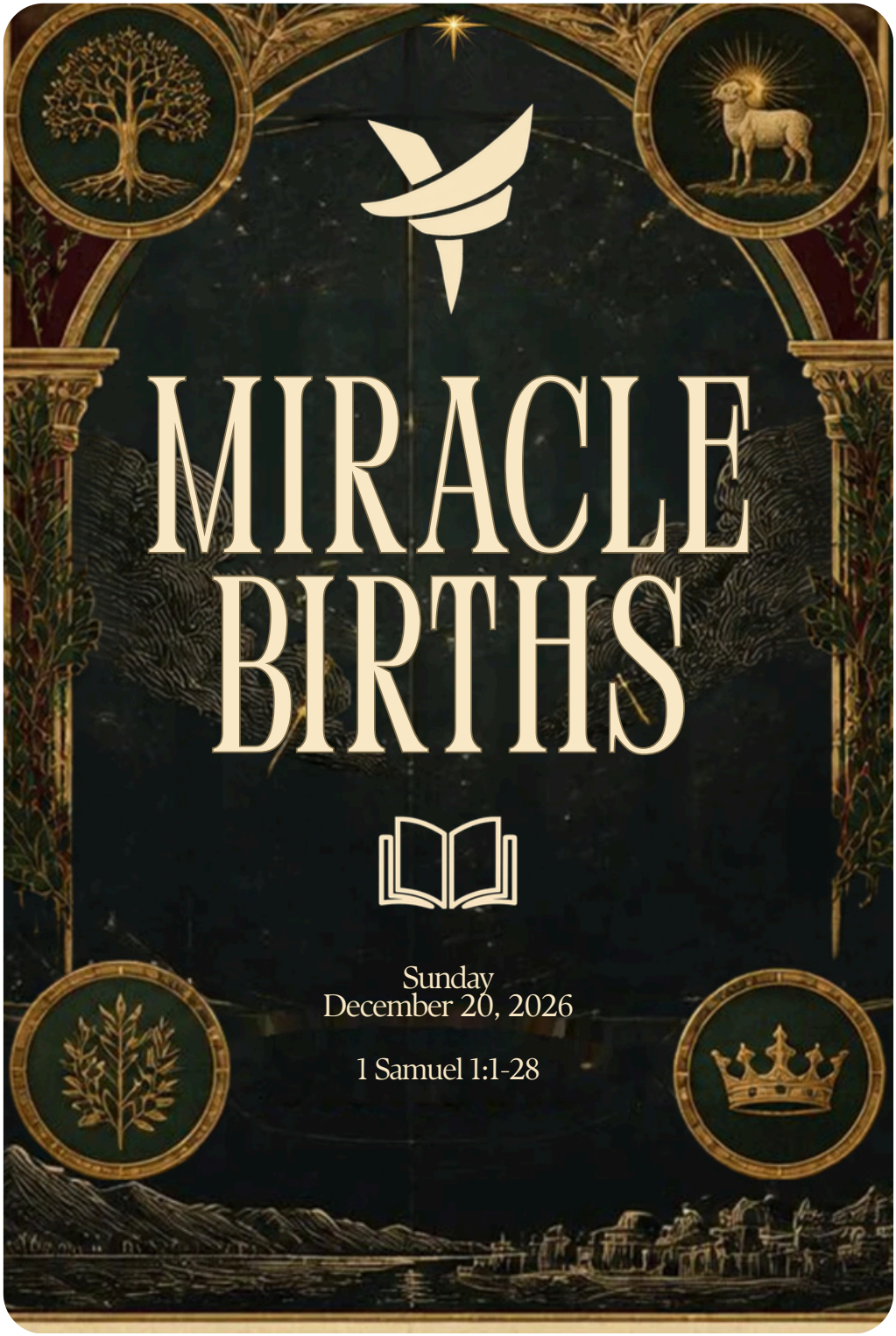
MIRACLE
BIRTHS
Sunday
December 20, 2026
1 Samuel 1:1-28

# Example Teaching Rhythm

**Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes**
This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.
**Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes**
Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.
**Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes**
This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.
**Prayer: 10 Minutes**
Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

# Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond.** Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

**Highlight** - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.
**Explain** - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.
**Apply** - Application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

**Respond** - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? – Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

# Prophet

God sees the longing no one else notices, gives a child who hears His voice, and sends the Savior at Christmas.

## Introduction

Picture the table at Shiloh during the yearly sacrificial meal. The whole family is eating, and Hannah has pushed her plate away. Her husband Elkanah leans over and asks her four questions in a single breath: why are you crying, why aren't you eating, why is your heart so heavy, and am I not worth more to you than ten sons? The text doesn't record a single answer, only that after the meal Hannah gets up and goes to the sanctuary to pray, and the whole story turns on what happens there.

It would be easy to cast Elkanah as the problem, but he is really trying. He has been serving Hannah a double portion because he loves her (v.5), and the line about ten sons is what love sounds like when it can't fix anything. The trouble is that everyone around Hannah has already decided what her pain means. Her rival sees an easy target, her husband sees a problem he can solve by being enough, and Eli the priest, noticing a woman whose mouth moves without a sound, concludes that he has found a drunk. Nobody hears her, because for most of this chapter she isn't speaking out loud (v.13), and the only One who never needed the volume is the One she is actually talking to.

That is where our fourth birth in this series begins. So far we have seen a laugh in a tent, a baby in a basket, and a Nazirite who was promised only that he would begin to save, and Samuel arrives in a dark stretch of his own. Judges ends with Israel in chaos, and 1 Samuel opens at a sanctuary where Eli's two sons serve as priests and where, two chapters later, the narrator admits that the word of the LORD was rare (3:1). So how does God answer a silence like that? He answers it with a prayer nobody could hear, which means the prophet who will hear God and tell Israel what He said starts life as a request that only God ever heard. It is a strange and tender way for heaven to begin again, and it is exactly the way Advent always begins.

Advent has the same fingerprints: a long quiet, an unlikely woman in an out-of-the-way place, a child asked for and given, and a song that sounds a lot like Hannah's when Mary sings it in Luke 1:46–55. Every year the church sits down in that long quiet beside the Hannahs of the world and lights one more candle, because the waiting is not the whole story and we know Who is coming. This week's word is Prophet, and the One we are waiting for is the Voice that every prophet pointed toward, so as we read, ask who you picture on the other end of your own prayers: Elkanah, Eli, or the LORD of hosts.

## Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- What is something you wanted for so long that you eventually stopped mentioning it? What made you go quiet?
- When someone misreads what you are going through, what do they usually assume? What do you wish they had asked instead?
- Who in your life seems to notice what you have not said? What have they done that makes that possible?
- What do you do with a prayer you have prayed a hundred times without an answer: keep praying it, retire it, or change it?
- Think of something you waited years to receive. Did getting it make you hold it more loosely or more tightly?

Phoenix, Arizona, 1980. Seven-year-old Chris Greicius is gravely ill with leukemia, and the thing he wants most is to be a police officer. Tommy Austin, a U.S. Customs agent and family friend, knows it, and when his own agency stalls, he takes the problem to Ron Cox of the Arizona Department of Public Safety. On April 29, a police helicopter flies Chris over Phoenix, and he is sworn in as Arizona's first and only honorary DPS officer. He dies four days later, and the memorial fund the officers start in his name grows into the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

- Chris was known before the helicopter ever landed: someone had noticed what he longed for and taken it seriously. What would it mean to you to learn that someone had been quietly paying attention to what you have never said out loud?

## Highlight | 1 Samuel 1:1-28

This chapter rewards a pen, so mark four things as you read. Start with the sentence the narrator repeats on purpose, "the LORD had closed her womb" (vv.5, 6), which comes with no reason and no apology and leaves us at a locked door knowing only who holds the key.

Next, listen for volume. Hannah weeps bitterly (v.10), prays "in her heart" while "her voice was not heard" (v.13), and when Eli demands an explanation says she has been "pouring out my soul before the LORD" (v.15). The only audience that counts is the One nobody in the room can see.

Then look at the gap between verses 17 and 18. Eli says, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition," a wish from a man who has no idea what she asked, yet verse 18 finds Hannah eating, "and her face was no longer sad," with nothing about her circumstances changed. In a season built on waiting, that is worth remembering: peace can arrive before the answer does.

Finally, look for the Hebrew root behind asked (vv.17, 20, 27) and lent (v.28). Your translation may soften one to "petition" or "dedicated," but it is a single root, so the prayer that begged for a son and the gift that handed him back speak the same word. Together these four marks trace the whole passage: a longing seen, a prayer heard, a peace before the answer, and a gift given away.

- Between verse 17 and verse 18 nothing in Hannah's situation changed. What do you think did?
- The narrator says twice that the LORD closed her womb and never says why. How do you want to respond to that, and what do you do with it?

## Explain | Consider the Context

Recall how Judges ends: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). That is the Israel Samson left behind, still under Philistine rule until Samuel's day (1 Sam 7:13). First Samuel opens at Shiloh, where Eli's sons serve as priests (v.3) until chapter 2 calls them "worthless men" (2:12), the same Hebrew word, beliyya'al, Hannah uses when she begs Eli not to count her a "worthless woman" (v.16).

Her household looks like her age, with one man, two wives, and a feud, as in the tents of Abraham and Jacob (Gen 16; 29–30). She also joins a line of barren women, from Sarah and Rebekah to Rachel and Samson's mother, with Elizabeth the last of them (Gen 11:30; 25:21; 29:31; Judg 13:2; Luke 1:7).

Her prayer borrows its vocabulary. She asks God to "look on the affliction" of His servant (v.11), the word God uses with Moses in Exodus 3:7, so one woman's private grief is prayed in the language of the Exodus. She calls Him "LORD of hosts," a title that debuts here (v.3), and her uncut-hair vow echoes the Nazirite vow given to Samson's mother (Judg 13:5). She prays to the God who had been seeing, hearing, and coming down all along, and the good news of Advent is that He was not finished coming.

- Hannah borrowed God's words about Israel in Egypt for her own grief. What does that suggest she believed about how God sees one person?
- God answered this prayer at the doorway of a sanctuary whose priestly family was already unraveling. What do you do with that?

## Apply | Discuss as a Group

Two men come near Hannah's pain, and both end up on her side. Elkanah's "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" is love trying to be enough, yet it tells a hurting person the hole should shrink because we are standing beside it. Eli watches a woman pray and never asks, as we do, yet when Hannah answers (v.16), he blesses her, a readiness to be corrected that is worth stealing.

The One she was talking to treats a silent vow as a finished request, and verse 19's "the LORD remembered her" describes Him acting on what He never lost track of. A prayer need not be audible to be heard, since the Spirit carries even our groans (Rom 8:26–27). She keeps her conditional vow even when it costs her the very thing she asked for (v.28).

Twice the text says the LORD closed her womb and never explains. Someone near you has prayed Hannah's prayer without getting a Samuel, and the chapter promises no baby to every weeping woman. It shows a God who does not look away, and Hebrews 11:39 names the faithful who "did not receive what was promised." If that is you, keep carrying the ache to the One who sees it, and take heart that Advent gives you company, as the whole church admits these weeks that we are still waiting.

- When someone you love is hurting, which comes more naturally: Elkanah's offering yourself as the fix, or Eli's reading the surface and guessing? What would it take to do neither?
- Hannah's vow was conditional, and she kept it at great cost. What do we expect from God in return for our prayers, and where did we learn to expect it?
- How can we talk honestly about a closed door in a room where some people received Hannah's answer and others did not?

## Respond | How should I live/pray?

December turns up the volume on what people are missing: the empty chair, the unused nursery, the prodigal who isn't coming home. Hannah's chapter hands us three moves and a Person to bring them to.

- First, say the true thing. Write one honest sentence about the longing you quit mentioning, and give it to God each morning until Christmas, as Hannah poured out her prayer untidied (v.15; Ps 62:8).
- Second, become the person Hannah never got. Ask someone with a heavy Christmas how they are, and when they say fine, ask again, kindly, and wait. Her husband fired off questions and her priest handed down a diagnosis, so put a day on it: a coffee, a call, a seat at your table.
- Third, keep an open hand. Whatever you waited for is on loan, since the root Hannah used for what she asked is the one she used to hand him back (v.28). If your longing is still unanswered, keep asking, hands open.

All of this lands at Christmas. Samuel heard God in the dark (3:10), Mary's song borrows from Hannah's (Luke 1:46–55), and Anna, Hannah's name in Greek, waits in the temple for the Child (Luke 2:36–38). He is the Prophet Moses promised (Deut 18:15), the Voice who walked into the room at Christmas (Heb 1:2).

And this High Priest misreads no one: Eli saw a drunk, but ours "has been tempted as we are" and invites us to "draw near to the throne of grace with confidence" (Heb 4:15–16).

So as the candles burn down, bring Him what you have stopped saying aloud. The God who saw Hannah at the sanctuary door and laid His Son in a manger is still paying attention, and He promises, "Surely I am coming soon" (Rev 22:20).

- Which longing will you say plainly to God this week, and at what time?
- Eli misread Hannah at prayer, and the High Priest at God's right hand does not misread you. What have you been keeping from Him?

## Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

# Additional Commentary

- On tseva'ot (צְבָאוֹת), "hosts" (vv.3, 11): LORD of armies, the God who commands every power in heaven and on earth. A childless woman at a sanctuary door takes her need to the Commander of it all and expects Him to notice.

- On ra'oh tir'eh (רָאֹה תִרְאֶה), "look on" (v.11): Hebrew doubles the verb for emphasis, so she is asking, "If You will really look." Three times in this one verse she calls herself "your servant," asking for a steady look at one named person.

- On hithpallel (הִתְפַּלֵּל), "pray" (vv.10, 12, 26, 27): the chapter's word for prayer, used for her long weeping at the sanctuary and again for her words to Eli, "for this child I prayed" (v.27). The same verb carries both her grief and her gratitude.

- On sha'al (שָׁאַל), "ask, lend" (vv.20, 28): the son she asked for is the son she lends, and the word for "lent" in verse 28 is spelled exactly like the name Saul (Sha'ul), a quiet pointer to the king Israel will later ask for (8:10).

- On zakar (זָכַר), "remember" (v.19): in Scripture, God's remembering is never recall after forgetting. It is God acting on His promise, as with Noah (Gen 8:1) and Israel in Egypt (Exod 2:24). Hannah asked Him to "remember me" (v.11), and the narrator answers with her own verb, so the waiting years were never forgotten years.

- On shama' (שָׁמַע), "hear" (v.13): Hebrew uses one verb for hearing and obeying. Hannah's voice "was not heard," yet God heard it, and her son grows into the one who says, "Speak, for your servant hears" (3:10) and "to obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22).

- On chen (חֵן), "favor" (v.18): Hannah's name comes from chanan, "to show favor," and her parting words to Eli, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes," play on it. Favor is undeserved kindness (Gen 6:8), which suits a woman with nothing to offer but her need.

## Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources.**

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.

# Additional Study

## Watch/Listen

**Bible Project - 1 and 2 Samuel**

See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **1 and 2 Samuel.**

**Bible Project - Advent**

See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Advent.**

## Overview

**Enduring Word - 1 Samuel**

Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings over **1 Samuel.**

**Got Questions - Samuel**

Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, podcasts and more on **Samuel.**

## Expand

**Bible Reference - 1 Samuel**

Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of **1 Samuel.**

**Bible Hub - 1 Samuel**

Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on **1 Samuel.**

## Deepen

**Logos Factbook - Samuel**

Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about **Samuel.**

**Blue Letter Bible - 1 Samuel**

Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on **1 Samuel.**