

Songs of the Women

A Bible exercise for Advent



If you've been in church during Advent, you've likely heard Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. Called the Magnificat, these verses follow the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, she will bear a child.

Mary's song carries echoes of the song of another woman from the Old Testament—Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Hannah struggled with infertility and prayed constantly for a child. 1 Samuel 2:1-10 is the song she sang when God granted her request.

As a Jewish woman, it is likely Mary knew of Hannah's song. So let's look at them together.

The following is a small group exercise designed to take 35 minutes. Adapt as needed for your time frame or group size. Everyone will need a Bible, and the leader should have access to a whiteboard, newsprint or other means of making a list visible to all.

Part I (15 minutes): Have one person read 1 Samuel 2:1-10 aloud. Without discussing, have a second person read Luke 1:46-55 aloud. When possible they should be read from the same translation and, ideally, read by women.

Ask each person to turn to each passage in their own Bible and read them through again, silently. For each song, instruct them to make note of:

- A verse/phrase they really like
- A verse/phrase they don't like
- A verse/phrase they don't understand
- Ask them to share those thoughts about each song with another person

Part II (20 minutes): Once people have shared with each other about both songs, ask the group to pretend they have no knowledge of other biblical passages or other church doctrines. Then ask: How do these two women describe the nature of God? List the responses. Close with discussing any or all of the following:

- Do the things just listed ring true for you? Why or why not?
- Do you think these songs are relevant to today's world? Why or why not?