

21 DAY / WEEK DEVOTIONAL

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

SUSIE PURKEY

Copyright © 2017 by Oklahoma District Council of the Assemblies of God
All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof
may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever
without the express written permission of the publisher
except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2017

ISBN 978-0-9986966-0-7

Oklahoma District Council
8701 N. Kelley Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK

www.okag.org



Introduction	4
Core Scripture	5
1. Deborah the Daring	6
2. Sarah the Starter	8
3. Ruth the Redeemed Refugee (Lineage of Christ)	10
4. Rahab the Rescued (Lineage of Christ)	12
5. Bathsheba the Bereaved (Lineage of Christ)	15
6. Esther the Emancipator	18
7. Dorcas the Darling	20
8. Abigail the Alluring	22
9. Anna the Advocate	25
10. Hannah the Hopeful	28
11. Tamar the Tenacious (Lineage of Christ)	31
12. Jochebed the Justified	34
13. Mary the Magnificent	37
14. Elizabeth the Empowered	40
15. Rebekah the Rascal	43
16. Rachel the Romanced	46
17. Leah the Loveless	49
18. Mary Magdalene the Misunderstood	52
19. Lydia the Lay-Leader	55
20. Susanna & Johanna the Joyful	58
21. Eve the Eternal Mother	61
Appendix	64
Notes	



Every Woman is a Daughter.

Not every woman is a Mother but there isn't a Woman alive who isn't a Daughter. For some, this word brings pride but for many others the word "Daughter" represents pain. Still, the word UNITES all women, granting a sense of belonging. It is an inclusive term, binding us together.

This 21-Day, "Daughter of the King" Devotional, seeks to utilize this common thread between us, to knit us all together as family. healing us from the inside out, we find our Inheritance is in Him. All we need is in father God. All that we aspire to, can be found in His outstretched scepter of favor and most importantly, as believers In Jesus, we are daughters of the most high God and as such, we are POWERFUL, PURCHASED, PROTECTED AND PROVIDED FOR.

Women today are facing insurmountable odds but we have only to look at history to feel empowered! Here, we will see women who inspire women with how they defied the odds, triumphed during times of extreme adversity and who were found faithful in the sight of Father-God, through it all. What can we learn from each of them? What can we imitate? These women didn't overcome in their own strength. No, they had the Spirit of God in them that gave incredible determination, grit, and grace, and we can have that too! In fact, the book of Ephesians says we have a deposit on our inheritance and it comes in the form of the Holy Spirit. Have YOU received the Holy Spirit since you believed? Read:

**"When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His Glory."
(Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV)**



DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

FINDING OUR INHERITANCE

ZECHARIAH 9: 16

New Living Translation

“On that day the Lord their God will rescue His people, just as a shepherd rescues His sheep. They will sparkle in His land like jewels in a crown. How wonderful and beautiful they will be!”

Amplified Version

“And the Lord their God shall save them on that day as the flock of His people; for they are like the precious jewels of a crown, displayed and glittering in His land.”

New International Version

“The Lord their God will save His people on that day as a shepherd saves His flock. They will sparkle in His land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful they will be!”

DEBORAH THE DARING



Name Meaning - Deborah means “Bee.” Science teaches us that of all the animal kingdom, the bee ranks among the highest in intelligence. Likewise, Deborah stands out in History as being one of the wisest women to ever live.

Scripture Reference - Judges 4 & 5; Hebrews 11:32-34

Deborah - was a Wife, Fearless Patriot, a Prophetess (which means she was able to discern the mind and purpose of God and declare it to others), and an Agitator of Change, Judge, Warrior, Poet and Mother of Israel. (Judges 5:7)

Setting - We find ourselves in the year 2650 after Creation, (1067 BCE). That's more than three thousand years ago! The period in which Deborah lived is known as the period of the Judges, and she was, in fact, the judge of her time. She and her husband Lapidoth lived in the hill country of Ephraim. Her office was set-up under a prominent Palm tree in the center of town and all Israel was under her jurisdiction. Imagine a steady stream of weary people flocking to hear words of wisdom and encouragement, to lift them out of deep despair and degradation, due to the sinful days they found themselves living in. God spoke to Deborah to deliver her people from the evil influences of Sisera, the brutal General of Evil King Jabin's army. She called for Barak and he agreed to lead the Lord's army in battle on the condition that Deborah accompany them to the battlefield. She was no lace-collared Judge! (Wink) Deborah was a mighty warrior, equipped by God with superior spiritual, mental and physical powers. Outnumbered and against all odds, they defeated the evil rulers, along with the help of another savvy woman of mention, Jael, who drove a tent peg through the temples of Sisera, while he slept. Afterward, Deborah composed a most beautiful Poem about the battle. It is known as the Song of Deborah and is regarded as one of the oldest and best literary works in the history of the world, dating back to the Twelfth Century. Hers was a brilliant career because she had a heart fixed upon God. Out of the battle came the moral purification of the Nation and there was peace in the land for forty years.



SARAH THE STARTER



Name Meaning - Her original name Sarai meaning “a princess” was changed by God, at the age of 90, to signify His Divine Purpose for her - Sarah meaning “chieftainess,” the feminine of “captain or commander”, fulfilled His promise to her to be the “Mother of many Nations.”

Scripture References - Genesis 11:29 -31; 17:18, Hebrews 11:11; 1Peter 3:6

Setting - Sarah came from Ur (Babylonia), from an honored family. She was the daughter of Terah and therefore the half-sister of Abraham. In those days, intermarriage within families was common, (mostly for religious reasons) but not between those by the same mother. Sarah and Abraham were the first to be called Hebrews (which means “immigrant.”) Without question, she remains the first historical woman of the Hebrews and their first mother. As such, she is one of the most important females in the world’s history and the maternal source of the Jewish people, through whom the nations were to be blessed.

Sarah was beautiful. In fact, Hebrew folklore records her beauty became more attractive with the passing of years. (Imagine that! Without any cosmetics.) Even at age 90, Abraham feared that Kings would fall in love with her, which Pharaoh and Abimelech did. Her beauty brought trouble for Abraham and he decided to tell a half-truth that she was his sister (she was his half-sister) and not his wife, in order to save himself from death. (Genesis 12:10-20)

Despite God’s promise, Sarah remained barren. For a Hebrew woman, this was a scourge worse than death. She became desperate and took matters into her own hands. (Ever been there?) She did the unthinkable for any wife...she encouraged her husband to “take another woman”, her maid, Hagar. Desperation and impatience had clouded Sarah’s good judgment. So, she thought she’d help God out. Little did she know she would be instigating a Rivalry that would last to the end of time. Our disobedience always comes at a price. So Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham and after that, Sarah conceived the “promised son,” Isaac but the damage of her disobedience had been done. Two Sons...Two different Mothers...One Father. The competition was on!

We need only look to the Middle East today, to see the repercussions of her actions. Sarah was 127 years old when she died. It was said by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews, (we believe the writer of Hebrews to be Pauline) that Sarah lived a life of Faith. Indeed! Faith sometimes gets messy. In the end, though, her example of Faith is carried on in those of us today who live by faith in Jesus



Christ and trust in our Heavenly Father who has given us great and precious promises.

“It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep His promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead – a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.” (Hebrews 11:11-12 NLT)

Reflection Questions

- Sarah was Beautiful, strong-willed and determined. The scripture states that on two occasions, she lost her temper with Abraham yet she never disobeyed her husband. How can her legacy record that she was a submissive wife if she lost her temper a few times?
- 1Peter 3:6 (AMP) says we are Sarah’s daughters if we do what is right without being frightened by fear (that is, being respectful toward your husband but not giving in to intimidation, nor allowing yourself to be led into sin, nor to be harmed.) Do you think it was hard for Sarah to watch her husband tell a half-truth, to two different Kings, about her being his sister, instead of his wife, in order to save his own skin? Does submission mean that we must always “Agree?”
- Throughout Sarah’s life, through all her wanderings in desert places, and her occasional waywardness there ran the golden thread of a beautiful and loving submission to her husband’s interests and in this respect is a pattern for “holy women” to copy. How is Sarah’s submission to follow Abraham, an example for us in submitting to God’s plan for our lives?
- Describe a time in your life when you “took matters into your own hands” instead of waiting on God to bring your heart’s desire...your promise.



RUTH THE REFUGEE



Name Meaning - “Ruth” has a dual meaning: 1) Friendship. 2) A Sight worth Seeing. Throughout the Word of God, there is perhaps no greater depiction of true friendship, than that of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. (Ruth 1:16-17) Her character revealed that she was capable of rare friendship and she was also, of a sunny disposition, which always makes one more attractive. (Wink) Of the sixty-six books forming the Bible, there are only two named after women. One is Esther and the other is Ruth. Scripture Reference: The Book of Ruth; Matthew 1:5

Ruth - A young widow, faithful daughter-in-law, Gentile Refugee from Moab-living in Bethlehem, a humble Gleaner in the fields, an honored mother of Obed, the great-grandfather of King David.

Setting - Our story begins in the Gentile Nation of Moab. A family of Jews-Naomi, her husband Elimelech and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion emigrated there from neighboring Bethlehem, in order to escape the ravages of famine in their homeland. However, Moabites were regarded as Idolaters because they did not serve the One True God and it wasn’t long before the two sons took Moabite women for their wives, a sin against Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 7:3; 23:3). After a period of ten years, all three men fell ill and died, leaving Naomi and her daughter-in-laws, Ruth and Orpah, widows. Without a husband or sons, widows were in grave danger of starvation. With the famine in Bethlehem now past, Naomi made plans to return to her native home and both daughter-in-laws went with her. However, on the way Naomi pled with the two girls to return to Moab, marry again and settle down. Through tears, Orpah agreed but Ruth could not bring herself to separate from Naomi. In one of the most striking passages on Friendship in all of the Bible, Ruth 1:16-17 records her passionate exchange:

“Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you: for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God: Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do to me and more also, if anything but death separates you and me.”

Once in Bethlehem, word spread quickly that Naomi was back with her lovely daughter-in-law! Unable to work herself, the aging Naomi sent



Ruth to go glean in the nearby fields, a process of picking up the leftover grain from the harvesters. It was a meager existence. According to Jewish law, Ruth had the right to glean in any harvest field. However, God in His divine mercy, who orders our steps, saw to it that Ruth would glean in the fields of wealthy Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech. In no time, Boaz noticed the fair Ruth and fell for her sunny disposition and humble spirit. He ordered his reapers to leave handfuls-on-purpose for Ruth to pick up and also allowed her to eat her meals at his table, a rare kindness indeed. After a while, He made the necessary arrangements to take Ruth for his wife- a process known as becoming a Kinsman Redeemer. This Jewish process consulted the nearest next-of-kin to marry young widows, in order to preserve the family lineage. The nearest next-of-kin was unwilling but Boaz was second in line and willing to take Ruth as his wife. Before ten witnesses at the City Council, Boaz proudly announced his decision to buy Ruth's inheritance and marry her! Together they lived lives blessed by God and eventually gave birth to a fine Son named Obed (which means "a servant who worships"). Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David. Ruth found herself among the very elect, in the royal genealogy of Jesus and Naomi's aching empty arms were finally filled with a sweet grandson! Thereby, God's provision was made to take care of both widows, for the rest of their lives.

Reflection Questions

- Ruth had to sever all ties to her homeland in Moab, in order to go with Naomi. How did severing ties with her pagan land, and those who didn't serve the One True God, put her in a position for Blessing?
- Ruth's passionate exclamation (Ruth 1:16-17) to Naomi that "Your God will be my God and your people, my people," do we see any trace of indecision in Ruth's choice to leave her old life? Does God expect all of His children to sever ungodly ties before He can bless them or was that just for Ruth?
- In our current age of ever-growing strained relationships, broken homes and lonely people, what does the "FRIENDSHIP Book" of Ruth, say about the way God Himself views Friendship? God called Abraham a "Friend of God". Do you think He desires Friendship with us?
- Boaz was Ruth's Kinsman Redeemer, according to Jewish Law. In like manner, how was Christ our Kinsman Redeemer? How did He "buy our Inheritance", in order to take us as His Bride-Church?



RAHAB THE RESCUED



Name Meaning - The first part of Rahab- “Ra” means Egyptian god. Her people, the Amorites worshiped many different idols. In her culture, her name meant “insolent”, “fierceness” or “broad spaciousness.” Maybe she was a rebel, a fighter, a free spirit or a mixture of all three because Rahab was a Harlot. However, one thing is certain, her dynamic, risk-taking faith, landed her favor, forgiveness and a name in the Hebrews’ Hall of Fame and Rahab is one of only four Gentile women, who had the distinct honor of being an ancestress in the royal line of Jesus Christ! Wow. Talk about the God of a Second Chance!

Scripture Reference - Joshua 2:1; 3; 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

Setting - The City was Jericho the famed “Promise Land.” It was the worst of the cities of the Amorites, therefore God commanded Joshua to destroy it. So, Joshua sent out two young men as spies, to survey the city defenses that he might take measures in attacking it. In the providence of God, the two traveling men were directed to the house of Rahab to seek shelter in her “Inn.” She had a reputation for being more than an Innkeeper. The truth is, Rahab sold cloth and did anything she could to survive. However, unexpectedly the two spies found safety, shelter and a friend in Rahab, who could have been put to death for receiving the two men with hospitality after her King and country had denounced war (Hebrews 11:31). Rahab had heard things...Rumors. News had spread about an invading tribe. This tribe served an invisible God with no images to worship. This God had led his people to conquer the kings on the other side of the river. Despite being the strongest and best fortified city in the region and a key point of defense for the entire land, Rahab’s people were melting with fear! It appears from what she said to them in (Joshua 2:9), she knew both from where they came and what their business was. She was a pretty savvy Girl. In an unprecedented exclamation of Faith in the One True God, from an “unbeliever”, Rahab said the following in (Joshua 2:9-11).

“I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it,



our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

So, she hid them on the roof, underneath Flax panels drying in the sun. The guards came as expected but cool-headed Rahab made up a story saying; "Yes, the men were here but they left and headed out of the city. Hurry, you might catch them!" The unsuspecting guards were thrown off the trail of the two spies and proceeded, as Rahab suggested, out of town.

Once gone, Rahab made the two men swear to her by the Lord in an oath, that in return for hiding them, she and her family would be spared, when the Israeli Army returned to destroy Jericho. So they did and the agreement was made! Salmon, one of the spies, strictly warned Rahab that only if she did not tell anything about their present visit or future plans, she and her house would be spared. As a sign, Rahab was instructed to hang a scarlet rope from her outside window because the house she lived in was part of the city wall, which made for easy identification. The spies left. Once back at camp, they told Joshua everything.

The powerful Israeli Army arrived at the outskirts of the city walls of Jericho shortly thereafter and as the Lord instructed Joshua, marched around it for seven days blowing trumpets and praising their God. It was the sound of War. However, on the command of Joshua before the seventh day, Salmon rescued Rahab and all those with her in her house from Jericho, to the safety of His camp. Their lives were exchanged for her kindness. Suddenly, a great earthquake occurred on the seventh day, the walls of Jericho imploded and the complete destruction of the city ensued. Some time later, in an unlikely chain of events, Salmon who had rescued Rahab took her to be his wife and they eventually gave birth to a beautiful Son named Boaz, whom the reader will remember from our previous story. How good God is! Thus, Rahab became a historic part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ and this story is characteristic of His Amazing Grace!



Reflection Questions

- Rahab's sins were as scarlet (red), as the cord she hung from her outside window, eventually freeing the captive family. What other scarlet object freed all of us as we were held captive by sin? What do these three things: the scarlet cord, Rahab and Salmon the rescuer, typify?
- The Apostle James and the Apostle Paul both said of Rahab that she was justified by Faith and Works, are we justified by both as well? Is Faith without works dead? Read James 2:26. Write it down here.
- Perhaps the vein of Gold in Rahab was that she didn't think only of herself when she made her plans to be rescued. She made an appeal for her family as well as her own life. Do we make Rahab's prayer for the salvation of her family our own cry today? Are we praying with passion for the lost, so that the scarlet blood of our Redeemer will set the captive free? Pray now, for any unsaved family and friends that come to mind.



BATHSHEBA THE BEREAVED



Name Meaning - The seventh daughter or daughter of an “Oath.” A Canaanite name which implies “the daughter of opulence.” Bathsheba was King David’s most famous wife and the Mother of King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live. Being in the direct line of Christ’s ancestry honors her.

Scripture References - 2 Samuel 11:2, 3; 12:24; 1 Kings 1:11-31; 2:13-19; 1 Chronicles 3:5

Setting - Bathsheba came from a God-fearing family and was married to Uriah, one of David’s mighty men. Being a captain of David’s army and probably fairly wealthy himself, he and Bathsheba lived within the palace walls. We know this because it was visible from the palace rooftop. We find ourselves in a time of war. David sent out his army with Joab to fight the Ammonites but he being a mature man now and veteran of many wars for twelve years, decided to stay behind in Jerusalem. He was not where he was supposed to be. (Oops!)

Instead of fighting with his men, he was back at the palace with nothing to do but get into trouble. And that’s exactly what he got into. He opened himself up to personal attack and found himself involved in a deadly triangle of SEX, LIES, and MURDER.

From the palace rooftop, he could easily see down upon the other rooftops. Bathsheba and Uriah’s house was near enough to clearly see her bathing. (2 Samuel 11:2) We also know it was the time of her purification (the 7-day period of her menstrual cycle.) Levitical Law required a certain type of “washing” after this, to be purified. (Leviticus 15:19) Bathsheba knew all the men were gone, including her beloved husband. She would not have known the King was at home, as he was accustomed to going to war with his men. She may have assumed she had privacy. David, unable to sleep, left his bedchambers and went out on his terrace. The bible records that Bathsheba was very beautiful to look upon...but I don’t believe David was looking at her face! David lusted after seeing her naked body. This was his first sin. He immediately sent for her that night. That was the second mistake. He then seduced her and forced her to have sex with him. That was his third mistake. Basically, David lost all control when it came to Bathsheba, like a deer in the headlights. Unfortunate. To happen in the life of King David, a man with a brilliant career and walk with God and of whom the Bible records as being, “a man after God’s own heart.”

There are many in history that have accused Bathsheba of seducing David but this is clearly illogical. Women in those days wouldn’t have been able



to refuse a King's command without negative repercussions. No, he played the royal, gender card and poor Bathsheba lost. She became pregnant and sent word to him. Now David was really in trouble. Wanting to cover his tracks, he summoned Uriah from the battlefield, in hopes that being home would put he and his wife, Bathsheba together for a few evenings. However, loyal Uriah refused to go home to his wife saying; "the Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and the army are camped in open fields. How could I go home and wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I would never do such a thing" (2 Samuel 11:11 NLV) and instead chose to sleep in the palace. So, David had to think of something else...like MURDER! His fourth and most deadly mistake. "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when we practice to deceive," as the old adage says.

Unfortunately for Uriah, David sent word back to the battlefield with him, in a sealed message stating, "station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is the fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed." Which Joab did and Uriah was killed along with several other soldiers. (Vs. 17) David had major blood on his hands. However, he kept the lie going and after Bathsheba's accustomed period of mourning took her for his wife. In time, she delivered a son but the child of the adulterous affair only lived one week and then died. Subsequently, the prophet Nathan came and confronted David with the whole truth because God had revealed it to him. Caught red-handed and unable to continue the charade, David confessed his sin to the prophet with great remorse and broken-heartedness. God forgave them. Much has been written about David's repentance in Psalm 51.

The story has a happy ending for David and Bathsheba who, repenting of their sins, were blessed by God with four more sons: Solomon, Shimea, Shobub and Nathan. As previously mentioned, Solomon became the subsequent reigning King after his father David and history would record him as being the wisest man to ever live; all evidence of God's pardon and returned Divine Favor. Restored to favor herself, and now virtuous and wise as well as beautiful, Bathsheba brought up her son Solomon in all the ways of the Lord. In fact, it was Solomon who penned the famous words in Proverbs 31, a chapter forever linked with the most excellent of women. Tradition says that it was Bathsheba's teachings that really compose the Proverbs 31 woman as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter.



Reflection Questions

- If we can learn anything from Bathsheba, it is that she did not let her one sin ruin her life. What secret sin or failure might plague you, the reader, which you need to seek freedom from? God doesn't hold the past against those who have asked for forgiveness. Have you asked His forgiveness and then forgiven yourself? He's the God of second chances you know?
- Graciously forgiven, even God Himself could not avert the natural consequences of David's sin. A life for a life. The newborn son for Uriah's innocent life. Through this, do we see how God views the ugliness of sin? Do our sins have consequences that God won't necessarily reverse?
- Picture Bathsheba raising her other four sons. What input do you picture her instilling in the life of them? Which included the future King Solomon, who wrote: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) As mothers, how can our teachings impact our children like this and ultimately future generations?



ESTHER THE EMANCIPATOR



Name Meaning - Esther was the Persian name of this descendant from the tribe of Benjamin and her name means “a star.” Among the notable Hebrew women of history, her name shines forth as “the star of hope” to this day. Her original Hebrew name was Hadassah, signifying “myrtle.” The change of name may indicate the style of beauty for which this once hidden, now Persian queen was famous. She was a woman of clear judgment, magnificent self-control and quite capable of self-sacrifice. Esther was willing to fast, pray and even die for her convictions and her Jewish people.

Scripture Reference - The Book of Esther

Setting - The time period is 600 B.C. Esther was the daughter of Abihail who lived in the royal Persian City of Shushan, the modern-day city of Susa, Iran. Her parents died and she came to live with her uncle, Mordecai who loved Esther and raised her as his own daughter. Powerful King Ahasuerus, (Xerxes I), was married to Queen Vashti, as the story begins. After Queen Vashti refused to appear before the King’s court, she was banished. A search of all the fair maidens in the land was made and humble Hadassah with her dark, exotic features stood out and was chosen to come before the King, who when he saw her for the first time, must have been captivated by her physical beauty and radiant personality. Esther was chosen as his queen...a technical impossibility for a Jewess up against a Persian law that held the mandate: the royal line must marry a wife belonging to one of the seven great Persian families.

Haman, the chief court favorite had a “thing” against the Jews. He began a diabolical plot to exterminate them. (Sound like anything you’ve heard before?) Without knowing of Esther’s ancestry and loyalty to her uncle Mordecai or her people, he successfully engineered a plot that had the King’s approval on it to wipe out the entire Jewish nation. Under the instruction of Mordecai in the now infamous passage from Esther 4:13-14, this admonishment came:

“Don’t think for a moment that because you’re in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made, queen for just such a time as this?”

Esther began to fast and pray. She didn’t forget where she came from! Risking death, she came before her powerful husband during high court in front



of all his leaders, without being summoned...a bold move that took guts, grit and grace. His scepter of Favor was extended. Her life was spared. “What is your request?” The smitten lover inquired. “Come to my banquet with your royal Vizier, Haman.” Esther said, enticing him further. The King accepted and wining and dining commenced that night winning her increased favor with him. Esther requests a second banquet with the duo. However, on the following evening, in an unbelievable turn of events, Esther reveals to her Ruling Monarch that there is a secret plot against her life, fueling his protective anger. Finding his own Chief Vizier, Hamon the Agagite was to blame, he commanded that he and his sons be hung on the gallows that had previously been built for the Jews!

Subsequently, a great victory was wrought and Esther became the heroine of her nation. By her patriotism she won deliverance for her people and God used her as an instrument of His Providence to work out His divine plan.

Reflection Questions

- List three qualities Esther exemplified that had nothing to do with her being beautiful. How is beauty a stepping-stone to greater gifts?
- Esther wasn't the first humble girl to marry into wealth, in history. What temptations would she have faced in standing up for her Jewish people? What about us? When God brings blessing and favor our way, what are we to do with it, in light of the story of Esther? What does the saying “God can get it to you but can He get it through you” mean?
- There is such a thing as “righteous retribution.” The story of the self-serving Hamon receiving what he had proposed for others shows us something of God's nature. Haman was paid back accordingly. What have you learned about the aspect of God's protective nature over His own people from the Book of Esther?
- Read Psalms 23. What does God say he will provide for us as the sheep of His pasture? Who is the Good Shepherd?



DORCAS THE DARLING



Name Meaning - Dorcas is the first female name in the New Testament and is a Greek word meaning “Gazelle”- an emblem of beauty. In Hebrew, another name for Dorcas is “Tabitha.” Of all the women in the New Testament, she was one of the most beloved.

Scripture Reference - Acts 9: 36-43

Dorcas - She was a Christian, a Philanthropist, she was mourned and missed, she was raised from the dead and she was the cause of Revival.

Setting - The Greek seaport city of Joppa, which is today the southern and oldest part of Tel Aviv, Israel and has since been renamed “Jaffa,” is where our story begins. It is famous for its association with the biblical stories of Jonah, Solomon and Saint Peter. Phillip the Evangelist started the Church in Joppa and it became known as a center of fervent Christian evangelism as well as a source of social services.

Everyone should be privileged to know a “Dorcas.” The Bible records her as being a loving, kind person who gave out of her abundance. Perhaps personally wealthy to be able to give so freely, she spent most of her time sewing beautiful coats and other garments and attending to the needs of the saints. She was called “a certain disciple,” was a devout Christian and greatly loved. The Apostle Luke refers to Dorcas as a lady “full of good works.” Where did her desire to help the poor and serve the church come from? It is possible that she became acquainted with Christ as her Savior through the Church in Joppa? Christianity teaches us that as Christ has given up His life for us, we, in turn, must give away our lives in service for others. Jesus taught that those who come to Him, must take up their cross and follow Him. Dorcas lived this teaching out beautifully.

The time came that she became sick and died. Hearing of the Apostle Peter in nearby Lydda, the disciples sent two men imploring him to come to Joppa without delay. They knew of the powerful way God used the Apostles who had walked with Jesus and perhaps secretly hoped he could reverse her death like Jesus had done with Lazarus and the raising of Jairus’ daughter. Peter came.

Dorcas’ body had been lovingly washed, anointed with fragrant ointment and lay in an upper room when Peter arrived. The sweet-smelling fragrance undoubtedly met him at the door. Upstairs, she was surrounded by



weeping widows who had placed all the beautiful coats and garments Dorcas had made for the poor, around the room in her honor. Peter asked everyone to leave. Kneeling down, he prayed and then, turning to her body he said, “Tabitha arise.” She opened her eyes and when she saw Peter she sat up. (VS 40) It was a Miracle! Taking her by the hand, Peter called for the saints and widows and presented Dorcas to them Alive!

As you might imagine, word of this supernatural act spread like wildfire (they didn’t even have Social Media!) and it became known throughout all of Joppa. Subsequently, a Revival occurred in the city, causing many more people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to be added to the Church. God used Dorcas in life and God used Dorcas in death. What a remarkable thought. Oh, for one miracle like this in our churches today! Without a doubt, it would cause the weary masses to come to the foot of the cross.

But God doesn’t want us to just seek His Hand. He wants us to seek His Heart. He wants us to love Him for what He’s already done for us, by sending His only Son Jesus. Not just to need Him to satisfy our laundry list of personal wants and desires. When we do, He stands ready to perform Miracles in our lives! For just as Faith without works is dead, works alone without a deep, abiding Faith in the one who said, “I was naked and you clothed Me.” is dead. (Matthew 25:36) Dorcas found the secret to true happiness...to Love enough to give. In so doing, she left us a beautiful pattern to live our lives by.

Reflection Questions

- In Exodus 4:2, God asks Moses a question: “What is in your hand, Moses?” to which he replied, “a rod.” That rod is what God used to qualify and validate his ministry. Likewise, what did God use in the hand of Dorcas, that would define her life? What tool was she gifted with?
- God is still asking us today, “What is in your hands that I can use?” He’s asking all of us, what is in your sphere of resources that I can take and Bless? So, write here, what abilities, gifts and talents He has given you that you would be willing to lay at the foot of the cross and share with a dying world. Don’t say “nothing.” He has given every one of us different gifts. (I Corinthians 12) How will you begin?
- The modern-day and greatly admired teacher, Joyce Meyer says what we give to God must cost us something. A gift without sacrifice isn’t really a gift...it’s just getting rid of something you really don’t want. When was the last time you gave away something of value to someone else in order to meet a need or to just bless him or her? What was it?



ABIGAIL THE ALLURING



Name Meaning - Abigail means “Father of Joy,” or “Cause of Joy.” Although married to a raging alcoholic who abused her daily, through the providence of God she wound up marrying King David because of her beneficent beauty and brains. Today, many women try to cultivate the former and forget the latter. However, she was a beautiful girl with a beautiful mind and Abigail is proof that it doesn’t matter if we come from the wrong side of the tracks... God can raise us up! If, we position ourselves for Blessing, by making the right choices. Abigail knew God. Her wisdom in difficult situations became her pivoting point out of her prison into the palace. Let’s learn something from Abigail!

Scripture Reference - I Samuel 25:1-42; II Samuel 3:3

Setting - The unhappy home of a wealthy drunkard named Nabal, a churlish devil of a man who Abigail had the misfortune of being married to, is where we begin our story. We have no record of her genealogy or who her parents were only that she was acquainted with the teachings and the prophets in Israel and that gives us a possible glimpse into her upbringing.

Nabal’s God was himself and his money. Scripture records he served “Belial,” the god of this world and not the God of his fathers. In other words, he was a backslidden Jew. Not surprisingly, Nabal’s name means “a Fool.” (vs 25) Perhaps his wretched disposition and rebelliousness of heart were a source of his anger and antagonism? (Angry people are always running from something) In any case, he was wholly unmanageable, stubborn and ill-tempered and as a follower of rejected King Saul shared a jealousy and angst for David. He seethed over something every day and night, it seemed, and poor Abigail had to walk on eggshells just to survive. She got good at it. In fact, she became a master at outsmarting him by using piety and tact. Yet, she took her marriage vows “for better or worse” seriously and never publicly disobeyed Nabal. She often attempted to cover-up his folly to friends and neighbors, even making excuses for his ill behavior. An act of selfless love and submission, which opened the door for God’s Favor in her life.

The future King and his army were nearby and on the run, hiding out in caves. Tormented King Saul was not of sound mind and hell-bent on killing his successor and in a divine play of events, God planted David and his mighty men near the fruitful harvest fields of Nabal, in the valley of Mount Carmel. Weakened and nearly starved, David sent a kind request to Nabal for help. They needed rations. In return, they offered protection from thievery to Nabal’s



servants and herdsmen. “No!” The answer came back from Nabal. His flat refusal offended David and his 600 weary men. They prepared to attack, kill Nabal’s family and burn down his entire house to take what they wanted. David, Nabal and Abigail-these three were brought together in a tragic way.

Abigail, hearing from her trusted servants of David’s request and her husband’s typically rude response acted quickly to save their lives. Commanding the servants, she gathered up enough food and wine for the small army and rode out. David saw the trail of wagons and heavy-laden donkeys coming in the distance. As the attractive Abigail arrived, she dismounted and bowed herself low in the dust of the ground, exercising a posture of humility before the poised company of fighters. With beautiful words from beautiful lips, Abigail began to disarm the angry band with a gracious apology for her husband and took the blame for the offense! She was quite used to making amends for her poor sot of a spouse and had often poured “oil on troubled waters,” with his neighbors. Her experience served her well this time and the apt apology was accepted. In a gracious reply, the Bible records these generous words from future King David to Abigail:

“Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today! Thank God for your good sense! Bless you, for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands. For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from killing you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal’s men would still be alive tomorrow morning. Return Home in Peace. I have heard what you said. We will not kill your husband.” (I Samuel 25:33)

Returning home, Abigail was once again met with a partying husband who upon hearing what she had done for David and his men, proceeded to have a stroke the next day and was confined to lay on his side, paralyzed like a stone! However, God the great avenger, allowed him to die within ten days and his miserable life abruptly comes to an end. The rest of the story reads like a fairy tale. Upon hearing of Nabal’s death, King David sent his messenger to ask for Abigail’s hand in marriage...my, how quickly God can change the course of our lives! Abigail accepted his generous proposal and was off to a better life. She found her Inheritance from serving the God who turns our mourning into JOY.



Reflection Questions

- Although marriages were typically pre-arranged by the family in biblical times, women still had a choice, even if it meant running away. Unfortunately, in this case possessions were chosen over the character of the man (specifically, Nabal.) Do you think God-fearing Abigail should have resisted her marriage to an unbelieving, backslidden Jew, even though he was very rich?
- Read II Corinthians 6:14-16. What does it say about being unequally yoked (married) together with an unbeliever?
- Sometimes women agree to marry a man with a different set of beliefs, hoping to change them. Is that scriptural? Read II Corinthians 6:14 again. What does it say about light living with darkness? Is plowing ahead in this case, disobedience?
- Assuming one is already trapped in a bad marriage and the mistake has been made. What does the life of Abigail teach us about living a Godly life despite living with an unbeliever? Name three ways she honored her marriage vows.



ANNA THE ADVOCATE



Name Meaning - Anna means “Favor or Grace.” It remains one of the most popular female names today and seems to transcend time and trend. We know from the Apostle Luke’s account, that Anna was the first Missionary-giving witness that Jesus was the Messiah, after personally witnessing his parents dedicate Him, in the temple.

Scripture Reference - Luke 2: 36-38

Setting - Anna was the daughter of Phanuel from the Tribe of Asher. (Asher was one of the twelve sons of Jacob.) We know six things about Anna, even though we only have two verses in the Bible dedicated to her memory:

1) She was a prophet- a prophet is a person who proclaims a divine message and Anna was used not only in this way but she was shown events before and after and God used her to speak to others of the coming Messiah.

2) She was old – Anna was at least one hundred years old.

3) She was a widow- we don’t know the name of her husband but scripture records she was left a childless widow after being married to him for only seven years. Subsequently, she lived another eighty-four years.

4) She never departed from the temple – Luke’s account says that Anna “was there in the temple day and night.” In other words, her seat was always filled. She made a priority out of God’s house.

5) She served God with Fasting and Prayers – Anna wasn’t just a retired member of the AARP. (Wink) No, she made productive use of her time where it counted... through fasting and prayer. Sometimes elderly people only want to talk about what “hurts”-their physical ailments, but that never changes anything. Prayer and fasting, however, can move mountains. Anna was one of God’s elect. A Holy woman with her heart and mind fastened upon Him and she was willing to crucify the flesh and to miss a few meals, to gain the ear of the Everlasting.

6) She witnessed to the world around her- since Anna was “at Church” the day Jesus showed up (think about that one...), she didn’t miss his arrival! Many have longed to see what her eyes saw. God honored her then and God honors



her now through the biblical text, by allowing her to witness with her eyes, the Salvation of mankind. She actually saw Jesus. The world had waited so very long for the promised Messiah. Then, during the darkest days in history, He came. He was revealed. Those who were praying, fasting and expectant, like Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, her son, John the Baptist, etc. were privileged to actually meet Him. Through Faith and after her long years of waiting, she became the first missionary, telling everyone she met about the manifested Messiah.

The Church is in another “waiting period.” When Jesus rose from the dead and was taken up to heaven over two thousand years ago, He promised He would return again for His Bride-church. Like Anna, the church has been waiting and waiting but have we developed the posture of prayer and fasting, which brings divine expectation like she did? Or has much of the church been ensnared by trivial pursuits and religious exercises devoid of any real power and presence of Jesus in its witness? (Aka: Religiosity) Have we become self-absorbed in the cares of this life and slowly drifted from our one true love?

Oh, may we pattern after Anna of old – who found that in place of what God took-He gave her more of Him! She found her purpose was crying day and night unto the Everlasting God who opened the doors and came in, unto her. May she be a compelling character in our lives to call us to the place of intimacy with Him through intercessory prayer! Perhaps He will speak to us secret things others could only hope to hear and know, as a reward.



HANNAH THE HOPEFUL



Name Meaning - Hannah means “gracious” or “graciousness” in Hebrew. It is very similar to that of our previous character “Anna.” Hannah personifies Ideal Motherhood but it took her a looooong time to get there!

Scripture Reference - 1 Samuel 1; 2:1 & 21

Setting - Hannah was married to Elkanah, a Levite from the Tribe of Levi (one of Jacob’s twelve sons) and was a kind and honorable man. They were unable to have a child together because Hannah was barren. Although a godly man, Elkanah followed the common custom of the day-Polygamy. (Sigh) Peninnah was Elkanah’s second wife and Hannah’s nemesis. Peninnah was as fertile as a field and able to have many children. She taunted Hannah often with jeers and verbal condescension. It hurt so badly that Hannah cried bitter tears before the Lord day and night. Trying to comfort his favorite wife, Elkanah would bring her little treats and offer kind words to her such as, “Why are you crying? Am I not better to you than ten sons?” However, it was the burning desire of every Hebrew woman to have a son and she did not.

Hannah put her hope in the Lord of Hosts. Piety and Grace (as her name implies) reigned supreme in her life and she navigated the rocky road of daily life with the punishing Peninnah who rubbed-it-in with glee, every chance she got that Hannah remained barren and had not produced a son to Elkanah. Hannah held her tongue though and resisted petty retaliation. Instead, she cried out to the one whom her soul loved and struck a deal with the Divine. Verse two records her sacred vow:

“Oh Lord of Heaven’s Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut.”

Overhearing her prayer and seeing the anguish of her heart and soul, Eli the priest came and spoke prophetically over her saying, “Go in Peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him.” In time, Hannah and Elkanah had a beautiful son and they named him Samuel, which means “I asked the Lord for him.” How she loved that little boy! She took her time weaning him. (Do you blame her?) However, faithfully keeping her promise to God, she took Samuel to the temple and presented him to the priest, once he was finally



Reflection Questions

- Peninnah's harsh treatment of Hannah could be likened to a modern-day term "Mean Girls." Words hurt. Words leave scars that go deep. Sometimes our words are thoughtless and unloving and we don't stop to think about how they leave lasting sorrow to others. How necessary is it to guard our tongues? Read James 3:9,10. What does it say? Write it down.
- Proverbs 14:1 says, "A wise woman builds her home, but a foolish woman tears hers down with her own hands," or mouth as yours truly likes to say! Hannah had the ability to control her tongue and take her heartaches about other people in her family to the Lord. What rewards came from that?
- Name a situation in your own family...your husband, children, extended relatives where you could put this example of Hannah's Hopefulness and holding your tongue into practice.
- Did God avenge Hannah? How? Name three ways she was rewarded.
- Whose love (besides the Lord's) did Hannah win because of her gracious spirit? How did Elkanah, her husband, show her favoritism even though she hadn't born him any children? Why do you think he loved Hannah more than Peninnah?



TAMAR THE TENACIOUS



Name Meaning - Tamar means “a Palm tree.” Only three women in the Bible were named Tamar and it is even more rare to find someone with this name today. Highly regarded throughout the Middle East, as the most valuable of all trees, the ideas of beauty and wealth are associated with the name.

Scripture Reference - Genesis 38:6-30; Ruth 4:12; 1Chronicles 2:4; Matthew 1:3

Setting - Tamar was a Gentile from the land of Canaan. She married Er, the eldest son of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. One of the most Beloved names of Jesus is “Lion of Judah” and it was derived from His lineage of the tribe of Judah. Oh, what an interesting story this is... and (Full Disclosure) it gets messy!

Er was a brute beast of a man. We don’t know exactly what his sins were but evidently, they were wicked enough for God to slay him as a young man, leaving Tamar a widow. They had no children together. You have to understand what it meant to be a childless widow in the days of the Bible (reflect upon our previous story of Ruth); it was a bit of a curse. To not have a husband and to be barren as well, meant you didn’t belong and consequently weren’t provided for. Tamar desperately wanted to have a place in the world, to belong to a tribe (family) and have roots.

In the aforementioned story of Ruth, Hebrew law dictated a young widow would marry the next son in the family so that he could raise up seed for his deceased brother. In this case, that guy was “Onan.” Unfortunately, Onan wasn’t much better than his wicked older brother and he died young too, leaving poor Tamar a barren widow for the second time. There was a third son (Shelah) but scripture says he was too young to marry. Plus, after Judah saw two of his sons die while being married to her, he was unwilling to bless any future union with Shelah and sent the tormented Tamar back home to her father’s house. Tamar became desperate and we all know desperate people do desperate things sometimes!

Some years later, Judah’s wife died. After his time of mourning was over, Judah made plans to travel with his friend Hirah, to supervise the shearing of his sheep. Hearing of her father-in-law’s plans to travel, Tamar set herself up by the entrance of the village, as a prostitute. With her veiled face, Judah did not recognize his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Judah bargained for her services and secured them. At that time, there was little to no prejudice against purely secular prostitution in Israel. His price? He would send her a small goat from his flock.



However, Tamar wanted some collateral. So, Judah gave her his personal seal-and-cord and the staff he carried in his hand, as a guarantee of sending the goat later. The Bible says he slept with Tamar and she got pregnant. They both went their separate ways.

About three months later, Judah received news that his daughter-in-law, Tamar was pregnant. Furious, he called for her immediate death. However, savvy Tamar, sent word to him that she was pregnant by the man who owns “these things” and produced the seal-and-cord and the staff! (Sly Girl) Seeing that these were his, he became embarrassed and changed his mind, realizing he was wrong for not giving his third son, Shelah to Tamar in marriage, as the Law dutifully required. Judah decided to accept expectant Tamar and took her back into his family once again.

Tamar bore twin boys to Judah. They were named “Perez” and “Zerah.” Perez was born first, making him and his descendants the lineage of Christ and Tamar, the teased and terrified girl, who just wanted to belong somewhere and have a family, has since been immortalized and honored in God’s Word.

You see damaged lives and even our consequences do not keep us from being a part of God’s plan. Christ was sent into the world to bring mercy to damaged people like you and me. Jesus the Messiah loves us and gives new life. One day when we join God in heaven, He will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Will you give Him your damaged life in exchange for His love and mercy?



JOCHEBED THE JUSTIFIED



Name Meaning - Jochebed implies, “glory of Jehovah.” She was the mother of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Great kids! She is the first person in scripture to have a name compounded with Jah – or Jehovah. Indeed she had a glorious finale to a hard life of heartache and despair and in the end, God (the Great Avenger) justified her memory through her children. Jochebed was the quintessential Proverbs 31 lady and her children rose up and called her “Blessed.” (Proverbs 31:28)

Scripture Reference - Exodus 1; 2:1-11; 6:20; Numbers 26:59; Hebrews 11:23

Setting - Jochebed was from the Tribe of Levi (Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob) and was married to Amram, also a Levite. Together they had three totally amazing children. World Shakers! They are still famous to this day. They were:

1) Moses – whose name means “drawn out of the water” (Exodus 2:10) became one of the greatest national leaders the world has ever known. He also wrote much of the Old Testament, which included the story of his birth mother, Jochebed. God used him to free His people from bondage in Egypt.

2) Aaron – Moses’ older brother. He became the first high priest in Israel and founded the Aaronic priesthood. God used him to speak for Moses since Moses had a speech impediment.

3) Miriam – The Big Sister. She was such a nurturer...no doubt learned from her loving mother, she played a major part in saving Moses from death in infancy and later became a gifted poetess and musician.

At this time in Egypt, the Israelites were being used as slaves. They were in terrible bondage and unable to leave. The twelve tribes of Jacob had greatly multiplied and Pharaoh was concerned they would outnumber his Egyptian people and take over the land. So he ordered a terrible edict commanding all newborn males to be taken from their mothers and thrown into the crocodile-infested waters of the Nile River. (Unthinkable!)

Miriam was approximately nine and Aaron was nearly three years old at the time and now, Jochebed found herself heavy with her third child. “Would



it be a boy or a girl?” she nervously wondered. Moses was a healthy, fair child the Bible says. He was so innocent and sweet...how could she just let him die? Jochebed “dug deep.” Daughters of the King always do! Her desperation gave way to resourcefulness. “I will NOT let them take my precious baby boy!” she determined.

Imagine her making a little cradle that would float. With the help of nine-year-old Miriam, she gathered soft papyrus reed and palm fronds from the river’s edge and fastened it together with tar and pitch making it waterproof. Then she made it thick and it became a floatation device to carry her infant son. Lastly, a lid, to cover him from the air and sunlight but made with enough slits, to let in oxygen. Brilliant! They experimented to see if it worked. Finally, the dreaded day came when Jochebed could hide three-month-old Moses from the Egyptian soldiers no longer. Perhaps it was dusk or early morning but we know Miriam pensively accompanied her mother to the water’s edge by the bulrushes and the cattails...and the crocodiles. Gently, they laid baby Moses inside the buoyant bassinet and with baited breath, pushed it away. (Their hearts skipped a beat.) “Stay beside the shore and keep an eye on the cradle!” The mother told Miriam softly.

See little Miriam peering timidly through the feathery foliage with her watchful eye. Would Moses cry out? Would the curious crocodiles come ‘round? The riverbank of the Nile wasn’t the safest place for a little girl to be standing either, you know? Perhaps they prayed to the Almighty. Divine destiny took over and He watched out over Moses and Miriam.

The craftily made cradle drifted along on the breath of angels...right up to the palace where the Pharaoh’s daughter would be bathing and washing with her maidens. A cry was heard. “What was that?” the women wondered, “It sounded like a baby?” The sunlight danced on top of the water’s edge enabling them to see the little green basket peacefully floating by. A divine appointment. Retrieving the watery crib, they found the fair baby boy, Moses, whimpering inside. He smiled up at them and cooed. Who could resist such a “Gift from the gods?” thought the royal lady and claimed him for her own.

There is no doubt she loved Moses like her own child and spared no expense raising him in the ways of the Egyptians. However, she immediately needed a wet-nurse to feed Moses and told her servants to go and find a Hebrew woman who could assist them. Clever Miriam had stayed nearby. She wasn’t going to let anything happen to her little brother! Mustering up all her courage, she spoke out saying, “I know of a woman!” to which the Princess said, “Go fetch her and I will pay her wages to nurse my boy until he is weaned.” The Providence of God!

Jochebed was paid to nurse her own child and we can imagine how she tearfully cuddled and kissed and rocked and prayed the divine favor and



protection of God upon her beloved son and as she did, Almighty God heard those mother's prayers! He always does. Moses became the great deliverer of the Egyptian people and God used him mightily in an unprecedented way, to liberate and lead the Israelites (who numbered into the millions) out of Egypt, across the Red Sea and finally into Canaan Land. Without a Jochebed there would never have been a Moses. It's impossible to overestimate the importance of her life in history or of her powerful prayers for her three champion children. Never underestimate the power of a praying Mother or Grandmother!

Reflection Questions

- How has the story of Jochebed inspired you to pray for divine favor and protection upon your own children/grandchildren? Do we always have to be with them physically to influence them? How does powerful prayer like Jesus taught us in (Matthew 18:18–19), transcend time and space? Memorize this passage.
- Read the amazing story of John 4:46-54 (the second miraculous sign Jesus performed in Galilee). How does this story prove the prayer of faith can work from a distance? What happened?
- Although an adoptive mother who loved him raised Moses, something in his heart renounced her and her Egyptian teachings and through writing the first five books of the Bible, he chose to honor his birth mother Jochebed, instead. How could that be, since he had no real memory of her? What connected her to him so powerfully? How did Aaron and Miriam serve as extensions of Jochebed later in life? What bound them all together?



MARY THE MAGNIFICENT



Name Meaning - Today the most common name for girls is still Mary, which means “bitterness”, “trouble”, or “sorrow.” There are many variations of the name such as Marie, Miriam, Maria, etc. As her name implies, Mary the young virgin would have many bitter and sorrowful moments in her life, however, despite this, she became known throughout time as one who was “Blessed among women.” (Luke 1:28)

Scripture References - Matthew 1; 2; 12:46; Luke 1; 2; John 2:1-11; 19:25; Acts 1:14.

Setting - Mary came from the Tribe of Judah, (descended from Tamar) and the line of David. Her poor family lived in a city of Galilee called Nazareth. She became the wife of Joseph, a carpenter and later after Jesus was born, would have four additional sons (by Joseph), whose names were: James, Joses, Judas and Simeon and several daughters (unnamed.) However, Joseph wasn't the father of Jesus. God was. Mary was the first (and only) woman in history to become pregnant without having sexual intercourse with a man. It was a miracle. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be visited by an Angel? I have. Mary had this distinct privilege and it is recorded remarkably for us in Luke the first chapter.

“And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end.” The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:27-33, 35)

Holy Moly! Imagine this. What was Mary's response to the Angel of the Lord? (Hint: It sealed her FAVOR!) Then Mary said to the angel, “Behold the handmaiden of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” (Uh... this translates OBEDIENCE!) Its one of several reasons she's been honored throughout the Church World for centuries. To fully embrace an impossible situation or task with child-like faith and without argument...that's what Mary



did here. She was intentional about her acceptance of the Lord's will for her life. And God was intentional about her! In the foreknowledge of a Glorious God, He chose the time, He chose the place and yes, He chose the humble peasant Mother that would carry His Son in her womb. He chose the foster-father, Joseph who had to eek out a frugal living in a carpenter's shop. Yes, God chose an obscure place so that JESUS would experience the common man. The Son of God didn't grow up in the lap of luxury with servants waiting on Him. He was born in a working class family and learned to labor for everything He received... yet He was also fully God. Jesus was both fully man and fully God.

"The Magnificat" (The Song of Mary), further evidences her exceptional obedience! It's one of the most beautiful pieces of literature the world has ever received. Its prophetic poetry from the humblest of vessels.

"And Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever." (Luke 1:46-55)

Listen to the divine wisdom flowing from a young, uneducated peasant girl! She was prophesying under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, foretelling the mission of Christ. She herself would bear in her womb her own Savior! (Imagine that.) Mary was as much in need of a Savior as the rest of us. Despite how the Catholic Church presents her as immaculate and remaining sinless throughout her life, there was nothing superhuman about her. No, she was fully human and part of the fallen race and recognized her need of deliverance from sin and guilt when she sang, "My Spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior!" God chose her for her pure faith and she, in turn, instilled that in her infant son and throughout Jesus' childhood. Faith in God.

Mary never magnified herself- only the Lord. Her glorification as an object of worship, her function as an intercessor through whom prayers must be addressed to Christ, her ongoing care of Christ and continual influence over Him are the creations of ROME and RELIGION! We've been to the Vatican City over twenty-five times, in our eighty missionary journeys and sadly, it is a shrine and a trap into Religion! The Bible says, There is only one Mediator between God and man and that is Christ Jesus our Lord. Mary gave birth to the Son of



ELIZABETH THE EMPOWERED



Name Meaning - Elizabeth means “God is my oath,” that is to say, “A worshipper of God.” She bore a son in her old age and God was faithful to her.

Scripture Reference - Luke 1: 5-80

Setting - Elizabeth was from the Tribe of Aaron, the honored priestly line. (Exodus 6:23) She was married to one of the distinguished priests named Zechariah, so there was priestly descent on both sides. The couple were mature in age and had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive...the dreaded curse of any Israeli mother. She and her husband had prayed and prayed for a child. Now God had answered in a similar way to Mary (the Mother of Jesus) by appearing to Zechariah in an Angelic visit. Foretelling the birth of a very special Son...John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ, the Angel disclosed the marvelous news. The heavenly visit took place inside the temple, in the inner sanctuary (altar) while Zechariah performed his priestly duties. The Angel said;

“Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”

However, Zechariah blew it. He questioned the Angel of the Lord in disbelief saying, “How can I be sure this will happen? I am an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” which caused him to be stricken Silent and unable to speak for punishment until the baby was born.

In contrast, the Bible says Elizabeth was a Godly (righteous) woman who exemplified just the opposite response. Her faith in the Lord was strong and the scripture says she was “blameless” in keeping the teachings of the Lord. When she conceived the child and knew she was pregnant, her response was: “How kind the Lord is! He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.” (Luke 1: 25)



At the sixth month interval, Elizabeth had an important visit from her cousin, Mary (The mother of Jesus). In fact, both women were pregnant at the same time! A few days earlier, Mary had been visited by an Angel of the Lord heralding the Good News of her upcoming conception of the Holy child, JESUS, as well as notifying her that her cousin Elizabeth, was in her sixth month of pregnancy despite her old age. So Mary, hurriedly set out for the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived and as she entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, the baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb, at the sound of Mary's voice! The Bible says that at the sound of Mary's voice, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit!

(vs 42) “Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

To which Mary responded with the now infamous “Magnificat or Song of Mary” recited in our previous story. How did Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant? No one had told her and they certainly didn't have telephones or the internet in those ancient times...think about it! Two cousins both pregnant at the same time. One an old woman. One a young adolescent girl. Each carrying a holy child of divine destiny...a Forerunner and a Foretold Messiah.

As Elizabeth's time of delivery came, she gave birth to a son and when the neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. When the baby was eight days old, as was custom, he was taken to the temple for dedication and the circumcision ceremony. Everyone wanted to name the baby Zechariah, after his father but Elizabeth said, “No! His name is John!” (vs 59) However, the crowd of friends and family insisted that he be named after his father and they used gestures to ask Zechariah what his preference was on the name of his son. Writing on a tablet, Zechariah wrote, “His name is John.” Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God! Awe fell upon the entire neighborhood and the news of what happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, “What will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was upon him in a very special way.

Truly it was, for John the Baptist was a Holy man, who grew up and became strong in spirit and lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel. He was a Prophet who spoke of the coming Messiah, the one who baptized JESUS in the River Jordan and sadly, the one who eventually was beheaded by evil King Herod. Likely Zechariah and Elizabeth never knew the



fate of their beloved only child, for they were well advanced in age, when he was born.

Reflection Questions

- How powerful are our words? Look again at the contrast of Zechariah and Elizabeth's responses to the Angel of the Lord. Read Luke 1:19. How would you describe Gabriel's response to Zechariah when he saw his unbelief? Does punishment usually follow disbelief?
- Read Matthew 13:58. It says, "Jesus did only a few miracles because of their disbelief." What do you think would have made Him do more miracles and what does Mark 6:5 say?
- Hebrews 3:19 records these words, "So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter His rest." What caused the Israelites to wander around in the desert for forty years and not find the Promise Land?
- What did JESUS rebuke His disciples for in Mark 16:14?
- John the Baptist was never to touch wine or alcohol in order to be holy unto the Lord. What does this imply about the way God views Christians drinking alcoholic beverages, especially ministers of the Lord? Read Luke 1:14. What does it say about drinking alcohol?
- Ephesians 5:18 says not to be drunk with wine but to instead be filled with WHAT?



REBEKAH THE RASCAL



Name Meaning - Rebekah means “Captivating”. The Bible states she was very beautiful. Another meaning for Rebekah is “a noose or a loop in a tie cord.” Interestingly, since Isaac was both “captivated” and “hooked” by her from the moment he laid his eyes on fair Rebekah. They lived so happily together that he never took a second wife or concubine...a rarity in the days of common Polygamy. Rebekah was truly loved by her husband all the days they were married and she loved Isaac, too. However, (full disclosure) Rebekah could be SNEAKY!

Scripture Reference - Genesis 22:23; 24; 25:20-28; 26:6-35; 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; Romans 9:6-16

Setting - Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nabor, Abraham’s brother. She lived in the birthplace of Abraham-Aram-Naharaim, which is modern-day Iraq, Syria Turkey and Iran. This area stretches between the great Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. In olden times, it was known as Mesopotamia.

Isaac, the son of Abraham was forty years old and still had not married. Since God promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations, he knew Isaac must find a wife and marry but he did not want him to choose an ungodly wife from the Canaanites. (Genesis 24:3) So Abraham, a wealthy man, sent his most trusted servant Eliezer, with several camels loaded with expensive gifts, back home to his family birthplace in Mesopotamia. Eliezer had strict orders from the Godly patriarch to find a wife from Abraham’s family for Isaac. Upon arrival, the tired and thirsty servant headed straight for the town water trough to refresh himself and his pack animals, where he knew the women gathered daily to fill their water jugs and do other chores. Praying for God to show him which maiden was the “one”, along came lovely Rebekah. She politely gave him a cool drink when asked and even offered to water his parched camels as well. Could this be a sign? He wondered. Eliezer’s interest piqued further. He gave her gold jewelry in return for her kindness and then inquired about lodging in the city, to which he was offered a room in her family home.

Later, the faithful servant of Abraham revealed to the family who he was, his master’s name and the real reason he had come to their city. He then posed the question to them, “would Rebekah be willing to leave her home and family and travel with him to become the wife of Isaac?” As was customary, lavish gifts were presented and the family gave their Blessing upon the union. However, wanting Rebekah to make the final decision, they posed this question



to her, “Will you Go with this Man?” to which Rebekah replied firmly, “Yes, I will go!” Think about what a leap of faith that must have been for her! She was no wallflower. Rebekah was spunky and adventuresome (her gifts) and God’s hand had chosen her.

Back in Canaan, Isaac was out for a walk in the fields to meditate, when he saw the long train of camels approaching in the dusty distance. 20-year-old Rebekah veiled her face and dismounted her camel as they arrived. It was love at first sight! He was drawn to her exquisite beauty and her to his handsome, mild, meditative manner. It was a match made in heaven, as they say. The Bible says “Isaac brought her into his mother tent, and took Rebekah to become his wife, and he loved her.”

After twenty long years of being barren, Rebekah finally gave birth to twin boys. The only other Biblical record we have of women bearing twins was that of Tamar. (Genesis 38:27) Esau (meaning hairy) was the eldest and was ruddy and hairy at birth. He would become a hunter and preferred to roam around in the wild. The youngest (not to be outdone) came out of the womb with his hand on Esau’s heel! He was named Jacob (meaning Deceiver or supplanter) and was more quiet and refined, preferring to live in tents and to be more stationary. The Bible says Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob. Could it be that in Esau, who was high-spirited, skilled and adventurous, he saw the traits that first attracted him to his beloved wife? Likewise in Jacob, were the admirable characteristics of Isaac’s meek and mild temperament the allurements for Rebekah, since she loved her husband so? We aren’t told why...only that the partiality of the parents presented a heartbreaking chain of events.

As Isaac had become old and nearly blind, Esau, as the eldest, was entitled to the birthright and family blessing, went out to hunt venison for his father upon request. As soon as he was gone, Rebekah who had overheard the conversation made a similar dish and gave it to Jacob to take into his elderly father. (SNEAKY) She even went a step further and placed the hairy skin of an animal on Jacob’s hands and body, to make him appear as Esau. It worked! Isaac ate and enjoyed his delicious dinner and then called his son to his bedside and gave him the birthright blessing. Such trickery, at the hands of Rebekah (who was probably spying from a corner of the tent with self-satisfaction.) Unfortunately, for Esau who came back later, the damage had been done. Isaac had given away the prophetic blessing to Jacob as well as the inheritance. All Isaac could do now was to bless his favorite son Esau saying; “you will be the father of a great nation.” (The Edomites, who later brought misery to the Israeli people were from Esau’s lineage.) Esau was enraged and vowed to kill his blood brother Jacob for such an act of deception, forcing him to run away. Consequently, Rebekah would never see Jacob again. A dire result of her imprudent actions and she had the rest of her life to think about it!



Reflection Questions

- Rebekah was a loving wife but motherhood brought out a dark side in her. What are some lessons we can learn from this story regarding the Power of Agreement in Marriage and in parents submitting to one another, for the sake of their children? (Read Genesis 27:33)
- When we “pit” children against each other by using unfair comparisons, harsh criticism and unequal rewards, what are we teaching them about how to get ahead in life? Who does favoritism hurt the most? Us, our children, or both parties?
- Jacob had trouble being truthful and dealing honestly with people later in life, even repeating deception. From whom were these seeds planted? Our actions define our legacy. Bearing this in mind, name three positive things and three negative things Rebekah is best remembered for? Thought: What legacy are you leaving?
- Both Esau and Jacob became the father of twelve different sons or tribes. Their descendants are at war today as evidenced by the unrest throughout the middle east. Where can we trace this conflict back to? Do our actions have long-term ramifications?



RACHEL THE ROMANCED



Name Meaning - Rachel means “Ewe.” Similar to our loving term today, “Little Lamb. “Ewe” was possibly an affectionate name given to his youngest daughter by her sheep-herding father, Laban.

Scripture Reference - Genesis 29; 30; 31; 33:1,2 &7; 35:16-26; 46:19, 22, 25; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; 1 Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:8

Setting - Jacob has run for his life from his furious brother Esau, back to his mother Rebekah’s childhood home of Haran and arriving there, promptly headed for a cool drink at the town’s public water well. There he saw the girl whom he would be smitten by forever, the lovely Rachel. The scene was like a carbon copy of our previously recounted story of Eliezer Isaac and Rebekah... same town, the same type of thirsty visitor, same family! (“Must have been something in the water!” As the old adage goes) No, not really, it was God. His anointing was rich on these families. Rachel was the daughter of Laban, Jacob’s uncle and it would seem from the biblical record, was beautiful, well favored with a lovely figure and had all the good looks of her Aunt Rebekah. (Genesis 29:17) Yes, as the youngest daughter of Laban, it was Rachel’s task to go take the sheep to the water trough every day but to be there at the exact moment Jacob arrived was a “Divine Appointment.” As was custom, Jacob kissed his cousin upon their first meeting, lifting up his voice as he wept aloud, telling her he was the son of Rebekah, her father’s sister! Upon hearing this, she ran home and told the good news and Laban immediately came out to meet his nephew.

Interestingly, Jacob had just come from “Bethel” on his journey to Haran and had seen a vision of a ladder reaching from earth up into heaven with angels descending and ascending at the top! God spoke to him in a dream there, saying He would bless Jacob and all of his descendants and give him all the land on which he was lying, as an inheritance. It was such a powerful God-experience, a mighty revelation that forever changed Jacob that he finally became fully surrendered to the Lord God of his father Isaac and grandfather, Abraham.

He followed Rachel home, spellbound by her delicate charms and was received warmly by the entire family. After one month, a deal was negotiated between he and Laban that he would work with the herds but instead of being paid wages, he bargained for Rachel’s hand in marriage. However, the deal was that he must work for seven years. Wow, that’s love! love waits, lust pressures. The scripture says that the seven years seemed like only a few days to Jacob



because of his love for her. (Genesis 29:20) After the seven years were completed, the heavily veiled bride was presented to him and in the days before electricity, he didn't know until he woke up the next morning that the girl was the older sister Leah, who was extremely lacking in the good looks of her younger sister Rachel. Trickery! Poor Jacob was not detoured however and after his shock, was able to renegotiate another deal with the shrewd Laban to finish out the wedding week with Leah, after which he would be given Rachel's hand in marriage the following week, for the price of (wait for it), another seven long years of work on the family farm! (Mic drop)

So Jacob made love to Rachel also and his love for her was greater than his love for Leah (29:30), and the Lord saw that Leah was not loved and enabled her to conceive but Rachel was childless. They became vicious rivals. It was a recipe for disaster...two sisters, one man. Leah bore six sons and one daughter, whom we will discuss in the next story. Rachel had a problem with idol worship from her father's house for a time, however, no one knew it but God. Fortunately, she self-corrected later in life and finally, God remembered Rachel and listened to her, enabling her to conceive and in taking away her disgrace she gave birth to a brilliant son and named him Joseph (meaning: "The Lord will add to me another son" Genesis 30:22-24). Joseph became the Godliest and greatest of all of Jacob's twelve sons, becoming a type of "Savior" to the Israelites in Egypt during the great famine of their lifetime. Her influence on a young boy is immeasurable, seeing he became a man who deeply loved God, (hinting at her own abiding faith) and his Jewish heritage and faith. It was at her knee that he first learned to love and fear the Lord. Rachel would also bear a second, tragic son of consequence for when she agonized a second time in labor, it was with her last breath that she cried out the name of her child, "Benoni" (which means "son of sorrow." Genesis 35:16-18). Jacob later changed the name to Benjamin (meaning: "Son of the right hand") and showed obvious favoritism to not only Benjamin but also his older brother Joseph showering both boys with affection and gifts. A foreshadowing of more trouble ahead in the lives of the twelve sons, who were to be the proliferation of the greatest nation on earth and the lineage of Jesus Christ. Rachel played her irreplaceable part in it all (Ruth 4:11) and of all the women in the Bible, she was perhaps the greatest romanced by any man. Her identity and grave was marked in a special way with a pillar and was visited often by the man who adored her and became a familiar landmark and place of national honor throughout the Bible receiving honorable mention in several later passages. (1 Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:15)



Reflection Questions

- Jacob had a life-changing experience at Bethel where he saw a vision of heaven. Rachel in contrast was brought up with “household gods” as a type of superstition for good luck. (Read Genesis 31:30) It wasn’t until later in their marriage that Jacob learned of her misguided beliefs and buried the false figurines in the ground. Could idolatry cost us the blessings of God? What curse had Rachel constantly prayed to be delivered from?
- Name some modern-day idols found in our culture. How do people worship idols today? (Read 1John 5:20-21) What did the Apostle John pray for in the early church?
- Joseph was a type of savior for Israel and as such was a forerunner of whom?
- Rachel had outer beauty but Leah had inner beauty and a deeper abiding faith. How did God reward these two sisters accordingly and what does the recipient of the greater reward imply about the way God values our personal faith and inner integrity over external beauty or talents?
- Our American culture pushes materialism, external beauty and uses sex to sell them. In the beloved story of Jacob and Rachel, we see God wrestled with both of them individually to get them to a place of full disclosure, surrender and gut honesty...to essentially stop deceiving. Why do you think God changed Jacob’s name to Israel? What does Jacob mean? Name some ways God has gotten your attention, to gain your heart?



LEAH THE LOVELESS



Name Meaning - Leah means “Wearied” and it could be that at birth, she displayed a delicate sickliness of some sort. The biblical narrative tells us that Leah was “tender-eyed” (Genesis 29:17) which probably meant that she had some abnormality of the eyes not normally associated with beautiful women.

Scripture Reference - Genesis 29; 30; 49:31; Ruth 4:11

Setting - As discussed in our previous story, Leah was the oldest daughter of Laban, son of Bethuel, son of Nahor (Abraham’s brother). So, Leah was the great-great niece of the patriarch Abraham. She had a younger sister named Rachel who was born with all the looks in the family. What would that have felt like? Did she hear people whisper words to that effect? “Rachel’s the pretty girl.” Leah had to dig deep to compete with external merits she didn’t possess... and she did so quite capably!

Along came the dashing prince. His name was Jacob and he was actually her first cousin. In those days, intermarriage with cousins was favored in order to keep religious beliefs intact and to discourage idolatry which can come from marrying someone of a different faith. However, Jacob quickly fell in love with her younger (prettier) sister, Rachel...no surprise there. Again, imagine how that felt to Leah? She was surprised one day when her father, Laban devised a deceptive deal, which undoubtedly involved her. She would parade as Rachel in the marriage to Jacob under heavily veiled face. Her father didn’t want the younger daughter to precede his older daughter in marriage and perhaps he had a secret concern that he wouldn’t find a willing suitor for lacking Leah? We aren’t sure. However, the private plot worked and Jacob had the shock of his life on the morning after his wedding night when he woke up to Leah instead of Rachel whom he thought he’d ravaged the night before! Jacob stormed off to find his dishonest father-in-law and object to the union. For a third time, how do you think Leah felt when Jacob didn’t want her even after she gave him everything she had that was precious to her? Rejection is so cruel.

Leah dug deeper. She truly loved her husband even though she knew he preferred another woman. Fortunately, she was favored with fertility, the essence of a Hebrew woman’s self-worth and in no time at all, she bore her first son and named him Reuben, (which means “Behold a son”) Leah praised God for looking favorably upon her. Then a second son came, Simeon (whose name means “Hearing”) Leah felt like God had heard her cry. Not long after, a third healthy baby boy was born to her and Jacob and she named him Levi



(which means “Joined”) Perhaps she was finally feeling a connection with the man she desperately wanted to love her? Leah had a fourth son later and named him Judah (which means “Praise”) and this son would be part of the lineage of Christ and is one of the beloved names Jesus is known by “Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” Indeed she praised her God for remembering her and granting a fertile womb! She would go on to eventually bear two more sons to Jacob, Issachar (meaning “Reward”) and Zebulun (meaning “Honor”) as well as a daughter, Dinah.

What Leah lacked in outer beauty, she made up in devotion and piety to her husband as a faithful wife and mother. She loved her children and brought them up in the fear of the Lord, something they wouldn't have learned elsewhere. Children always return to Bless the mother who has taught, cared for and lovingly nurtured them. (Proverbs 31:28) Leah benefited from six sons and a daughter, something her younger sister Rachel could never boast of.

Of course, Rachel did finally have two fine sons who were the object of Jacob's deepest affection but the second pregnancy took her life and sadly she was the first woman recorded in the Bible who died during childbirth. The sisters had been bitter rivals for many long years. Forced to be pitted against one another in the unfortunate culture of Polygamy, imagine the daily digs and verbal condescension between the two women. Can't you just hear it? “Jacob loves me more than you, he told me.” “Well at least I can have his children, you're all dried up!” “Yeah but I'm beautiful and you're not!” (Waaaaa!) Nothing has really changed about human nature since the dawning of time, has it? “Mean Girls” we call it...they're everywhere and God won't bless that kind of ugly, unlovely behavior. He never has and He never will.

Isn't it interesting that God chose an ordinary person of low estate to proliferate his Son's lineage through? Almighty God, although somewhat lacking what the world would deem necessary to the genetic basis of a King, selected Leah, over her healthier, younger and more physically endowed sister. (Hmmmmmm) Never underestimate the “Leahs” out there. Women who know what they're made of, use a deep abiding faith in God to gain favor in life, to get ahead and who in the end, out last, out live and out love some of the “pretty girls.”



Reflection Questions

- 1 Samuel 16:7 says; “But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” With respect to Leah and Rachel, whom do you believe God preferred? Why?
- Laban was a thief and a trickster for twenty long years. What was his eventual punishment when he learned his entire household (both daughters and all his grandchildren) rode off into the distance with Jacob? How do you think the girls struggled all those years, with what he'd done to them and Jacob? Who had the last say in the matter?
- (Read 1Peter 3:3-6) What does it say about inner and outer beauty? Which one does Peter emphasize is Godly? He mentions Sarah, Abraham's wife. She would have been the great-great Aunt of Leah and Rachel. What type of beauty does the Apostle Peter describe about Sarah?



MARY MAGDALENE THE MISUNDERSTOOD



Name Meaning - As we have previously discussed, the name Mary means “bitterness, trouble or sorrow.” The name “Mary Magdalene” refers to where Mary was from, the town of Magdala, just as JESUS was associated with Nazareth and was named “Jesus the Nazarene.” Magdala means “Tower or Castle” and during the time of JESUS, was a prosperous city on the coast of Galilee roughly three miles from Capernaum and was known for its dyeing of textiles.

Scripture Reference - Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:18

Setting - We have no information as to Mary Magdalene’s family background. However, looking at the prosperity of the city of Magdala and noticing no mention in scripture of a husband, we must conclude she was alone. She had some financial means and may possibly have had considerable wealth (Luke 8:2), as she and other faithful women of means (such as Susanna, Joanna, etc.), went along with Jesus and the disciples caring and providing for their needs during the ministry.

The Bible depicts Mary as a deeply afflicted woman with seven demons. Not devils-for there is only one devil and Lord knows that’s enough! But there are many demons. Seven is the number of completeness and one may assert that she was completely overpowered by these evil spirits who dominated her life and made misery unbearable. In fact, by the time JESUS meets up with Mary Magdalene, we can picture her sunken-eyed, hair disheveled and quite a mess.

However, in her defense (and in an effort to expose some of the ways Mary Magdalene has been so severely misunderstood) there is not a trace of biblical text or Christian historical data from the Church Fathers proving Mary Magdalene was a woman of “ill repute,” as some have asserted. The stories of her being a prostitute are simply hearsay and could have been derived from the fact that the seaport city of Magdala was a haven for harlotry (and interestingly enough was eventually destroyed.) Further misguided rumor has it that she was the sinful and “unnamed” woman (Luke 7:37) who came in to where Jesus was with an alabaster jar of perfume and knelt at his feet weeping, wetting them with her tears and then poured the perfume on them. However, NO eyewitness account exists of that “sinful woman” in Luke 7 being that of Mary Magdalene! That was ASSUMPTION. The “sinful woman” was “UNNAMED!” People need to be really careful how they start rumors about others with no basis of fact.



Tainted reputations stick and often ruin lives and legacies forever.

What we DO know of Mary Magdalene is that she had a powerful, unforgettable encounter with the Son of God. He saw her, He had compassion on her and He delivered her! JESUS was able to look right through her and see the demonic oppression and using All of His heavenly authority, He commanded the evil spirits to “Come Out!” freeing Mary and she was forever a grateful soul championing the cause of Christ. Saved from a hellish bondage, she followed him loyally, lovingly and in liberation from her unfortunate past. Going forward, Mary sacrificed of her means to advance JESUS’ missionary ministry and went forth from place to place with him. We never read that Jesus had to solicit funds for His ministry travels and that was due in part to several women, such as Mary Magdalene who went before him and took care of details such as lodging, food, etc.

Fourteen times, Mary Magdalene is mentioned in scripture. Strikingly, eight of those times, Mary heads the list of women designating her as a prominent gospel figure of importance and honor. Furthermore, five times Mary Magdalene is mentioned alone in scripture and those instances revolved around the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most significantly, Mary was the first person (male or female) at the tomb, which heard the heralded message of the risen Lord, by not one but two angels, one at the head and one at the foot of the grave clothes. How God honored her forever! (Mark 16:9; John 20:1; 11, 12; 16; 18)

Perhaps no other woman in the New Testament, save Mary the mother of Jesus, supersedes Mary Magdalene in utter devotion to our Lord. She endured the humiliation of Pilates Hall with his mock trial of Jesus. In utter disbelief, she witnessed His horrifying beatings. She tip-toed along silently behind Him from the sidelines, as He drug His heavy wooden cross in absolute anguish, falling at times under it’s crushing weight. She heard His audible groans along the way, helpless to help Him and was an eyewitness of His deep despair. Finally, she knelt in the dirt at the base of His bleeding feet and blood-stained cross on Golgotha’s hill, waiting for any opportunity to once again serve, comfort or care for the one who had severed her own grief and personal pain...but that opportunity never came. What agony! What Love! What Servanthood! Mary Magdalene, the misunderstood... What a life to imitate!



Reflection Questions

- Perhaps you can relate to Mary Magdalene. Has the Master set you free from some terrible bondage in your life? Your writer is one of those women whose shattered life was put back together again from the touch of His hand and the sound of His voice. Those like us have no other reasonable service but the cause of Christ. Servanthood is how we say “Thank you.” As the old song so beautifully says, “If it had not been for the Lord on my side, where would I be?” How are you compelled to serve?
- Write your personal testimony here or on a separate sheet of paper and list seven things God took away from your old life. (These could have been habits, bondages, addictions or forms of unlovely behavior.)
- List seven things the Holy Spirit has given to you in your new life in Christ.
- Read these scriptures. (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 16:28; Leviticus 19:16) What do they indicate about how God views Gossip and Rumor-mill?
- Read Galatians 5:22. What fruit follows the spirit-filled life? List the nine Fruit of the Spirit here.



LYDIA THE LAY-LEADER



Name Meaning - Lydia means “Bending,” is a word of Phoenician origin and has always been a popular name for women throughout the centuries.

Scripture References - Acts 16:12-15, 40; Philippians 1:1-10

Setting - Lydia was a New Testament woman who lived in the coastal city of Thyatira—one of the Greek cities in Asia Minor, now the modern Turkish city of Akhisar. It is clear from history that this pagan city was quite a melting pot of humanity and the chief object of worship was “Apollo,” who was worshiped as the sun god, also known as “Tyrinnus.” We know there was also a very strong Jewish presence in the city of Thyatira, who worshiped Jehovah. Lydia was a prominent and influential lady in the city who worshiped God.

The waters in and around Thyatira were conducive for dyeing fabrics and other textiles and consequently, this became a very lucrative export. Red and purple dyes were in high demand and Lydia had a prominent business of purple dyes along with a large house with servants. (Acts 16:14) It was commonplace for the women to gather at the riverbank daily for prayer and one such day the Apostle Paul and his company, while on one of his many missionary journeys, came and met these women and Lydia for prayer. They told of JESUS, the risen Savior and as Lydia listened intently the Bible says the Lord opened her heart and she accepted what Paul was saying. (vs 14) Lydia followed her faith in JESUS by being publicly baptized, (along with her household) becoming the first Christian convert on the continent of Europe! (vs 15)

However, not all in nearby Thyatira and Philippi accepted this Good News and it was here in Philippi that Paul and Silas were thrown in prison for preaching about their faith. While in prison, they began to sing and praise God despite their unfortunate circumstance, when suddenly the prison was shaken with an earthquake so forceful that their chains fell off! Upon their release the next day, they returned to the home of Lydia. (vs 40) There they met with the believers and encouraged them all once more. A new Christian church formed and they were once again, on their way to the next town. Lydia’s transformed life was evidenced by her willingness to give missionaries help, hospitality, and provision from her resources. As previously mentioned, once Lydia heard about JESUS, she accepted him, shared her faith with those of her household and was baptized in water, as a public profession of her faith. This is a pattern for all of us.



Later, when writing to the Church at Philippi, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Philippian Church that he started, by telling them they held a very special place in his heart and that every time he thought of them, they brought him joy! (Philippians 1: 3-5, 7)

“Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.” (vs 7) “So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.”

Lydia was able to manage a successful business without losing her soul to it. Perhaps that's what Paul meant when he penned the words to the Church in Rome (Romans 12:11) “Not slothful in business but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.” Could he have been thinking of our sister-in-the-faith, Lydia? Lydia not only sold her purple dyes but she served her savior. She stayed in business so that she could have a means to advance and promote the Gospel and she guarded her heart against greed by giving of her secular resources into the work of God's Kingdom. As Paul and Silas moved on and started new churches, with every soul saved and new Church formed, Lydia laid up treasures for herself in heaven. Some Go. Some Send. All are equally Rewarded. Lydia, the conscientious businesswoman, devoted Christian and friend of missionaries. Lydia the lay-leader with a gift of hospitality. How much we can imitate from her!



SUSANNA & JOANNA

THE JOYFUL



Name Meaning - We have chosen a pairing for this story. It is for the purpose of highlighting a group of women that share a commonality...Susanna and Joanna-like Mary Magdalene were among “certain women,” who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases. (Luke 8:2, 3) Joanna is a Hebrew name which means “Jehovah has shown favor” or “The Lord gives graciously.” It was true that the Lord showered Joanna with favor and she rose up and followed Him.

Susanna means “White Lily” and she was also one of those “certain women” whom Christ healed both physically and spiritually, and who revealed her gratitude by following Him and ministering to Him and His disciples of her substance (wealth and resources), for the rest of her life.

Scripture References - Luke 8:1-3; 23:55; 24:10

Setting - Susanna and Joanna, like Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of JESUS, Mary the mother of James, etc. were all part of a sisterhood that traveled with JESUS and His disciples during His three-year earthly ministry. As previously pointed out, it took finances and resources to feed, clothe and house this Evangelistic team and God provided for the needs of the ministry from within this group of consecrated women. Having freely received His touch, these girls gave freely of what they possessed back to Him!

We know that Joanna was married to Chuza, the steward (tutor or guardian) of Herod, a well-paying position within the King’s court. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe she had access to wealth. Tradition has it that Chuza lost his prestigious position in Herod’s household when his wife became a confessing Christian. One can imagine Joanna could hardly contain “sharing her joy and excitement” after being healed miraculously by the master, as the opportunity presented itself! These were dark days to live in and a bright light had shown upon the land through the Messiah. Good News was rare and hard to contain and JESUS was certainly the topic of discussion everywhere He went in the region. As people were healed, who had suffered for many years, they would Go and Tell. It’s no different today, as it was back then. We can imagine how Joanna longed to give something back to the one who had relieved her physical pain and forgiven her sins. She wisely chose to give generously into the work of Christ, so that others could experience what she had.



Susanna was another of this sacred sisterhood as we have mentioned. The Bible says that she was a woman of resources and gave generously from a thankful heart to the one who had ministered to her at a deeply low time in her life. She was also grateful to the Master for healing and deliverance and for the forgiveness of sins and longed to “do something” in return! She chose to “pay it forward” as we say and invested in the Kingdom of God. Money always wisely spent because it “lays up treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy or where thieves cannot break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:20) She wanted others to know the joy she had received...news too Good to keep to yourself!

Like Mary Magdalene, Joanna and other women of their sisterhood followed Jesus all the way to the cross. They watched Him die in agony and shame and brought burial spices and ointments to prepare his dead body for the grave. (Luke 23:55-56) He had ministered to them all, while He was alive and now, they would minister to Him in death. These consecrated women were also among the first to arrive at JESUS’ silent tomb on that Holy Sunday morning, to mourn Him and linger in the presence of the last place He would lay His head. However, the massive stone to the sepulcher was rolled aside and there was no body of the savior inside. They became eyewitnesses to this unprecedented and remarkable occurrence and were left to wonder in awe. It was Mary Magdalene who was spoken to first, by two angels of the Lord telling her:

*“The Lord Jesus is not here but had risen just as He said He would.”
(Luke 24:-6)*

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, became the first human beings to herald the wonderful news of the Resurrection. Joanna, Susanna, and Company...the “certain women” who were joyful, committed and loyal to our Lord, became the sisterhood of women who leave us much to imitate. They were honored in scripture for their faith and works, as ALL will forever be when we “sell out” and decide to follow Christ!



Reflection Questions

- Have you ever supported the ministry of Jesus Christ, in our modern-day world? If not, why not? If so, list some tangible ways you have advanced the Gospel.
- When Jesus saved you, delivered you, healed you, etc. what feelings did you have immediately following the “gift of Christ?” List three reactions you had here. How have you shared your testimony with others?
- Joanna, Susanna and Company knew they couldn’t keep their testimony of what Christ had done for them to themselves. What steps did they take to “share their faith in JESUS?” What did it cost them? List some ways they worked in “His Church.”
- We know we can’t take wealth with us when we die. You will never see a “U-Haul” being pulled along behind a hearse at a funeral! (Wink) So, just how can we lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven? Read (Matthew 6:1-4; 19-21)



EVE THE ETERNAL MOTHER



Name Meaning - Eve, a name given to her by her husband Adam, after her “transgression” means “life or life-giving.” She became the mother of all creation. (Genesis 3:16, 20) She was also known, before her sin, as “woman” (the name God gave her), which means “taken from man” because she was created from the side (rib) of the man, Adam. (Genesis 2:23)

Scripture References - Genesis 2 & 3; II Corinthians 11:3; II Timothy 2:13

Setting - We find ourselves in the famed “Garden of Eden,” sometime after the creation of the world. Fitting that we should end at the beginning! Eve gave us LIFE. She is the mother of all of us and her life is in all of us. She is distinct in so many ways...a woman of “firsts.” Let’s explore how Eve paved the way.

- **She was the First woman upon the earth.** She wasn’t born. Eve didn’t have a mother. Remember in our Introduction how we said: “not every woman is a mother but there isn’t a woman alive who isn’t a daughter?” Eve was a daughter in the sense she did have a father-“Father God” (Angelic choir sound!) and was created by God Himself. She was never a baby, a child, a teenager, or the daughter of a mother. She was created as an adult. She did wind up having a daughter (Genesis 5:5) just how many we are not told and if she lived as long as her husband, she was at least nine hundred and thirty years old!

- **Eve was the First woman to be called a wife.** Adam was created out of the dust of the earth but Eve was created from Adam’s side. She was made out of him, for him. A perfect companion. God spoke of her as Adam’s helpmate, giving woman her true position in the world. It is only where the Bible exists and is respected that culture gives woman a place of honor. In other dark places of the world throughout history and even today, woman is treated as property and the slave of man. Eve was created from Adam so that their two hearts could become one flesh – to Love each other.

- **Eve was the most beautiful woman the world has ever known.** In this 21-Day Study, we have touched upon some of the most beautiful women history has ever recorded...Sarah, Bathsheba, Abigail, Rebekah, and Rachel but Eve...she was the fairest of them all, as they say! Eve was “created” by a perfect God and she reflected divine perfection. She was heaven’s best and last gift of



creation. Beautiful in face and form and when Adam first laid eyes upon her naked body, he rejoiced! Saying: “she is the bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” (Code For: “Shes Mine!”)

- **Eve was the First and only woman to be born without sin.** Because Eve was created and not born, she didn’t inherit sin. She was pure and holy as she came from the hand of God. She was created sinless but unfortunately, didn’t stay that way and all born after she inherited the sinfulness of her human race and would need a Redeemer.

- **Eve was the First on earth to be assaulted by Satan.** Satan was also a created being an Angel. In heaven, his name was Lucifer. Rebellion was found in him, however, and he was cast down to the earth. He came to Eve in the form of a serpent. Hating God the way he does, he was bound and determined to ruin God’s new creation and used lies and deception as his tool against naïve Eve. It worked. He tempted her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree of “The Knowledge of Good and Evil.” The Bible says he tricked her and she was drawn away and enticed by her own curiosity and did eat the fruit. She saw it. She wanted it. She ate it. Then she gave it to her husband and he didn’t resist either...he chose for himself and ate of the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” BAM! Sin entered the picture.

- **Eve was the First dressmaker.** Eve hadn’t known before that she was naked. She didn’t even know what naked was...but suddenly she felt the need to go make a covering! She chose fig leaves. (Genesis 3:7)

- **Eve was the First mother to have a son who was a murderer.** How sad! Sin had entered the human race and it didn’t take long for them to begin self-destructing. Her first-born son Cain, slew his brother Abel out of jealousy. Jesus said of Satan (John 8:44), that he was a murderer from the beginning and so it was.

- **Eve was the First to receive the divine prophecy of the cross.** Eve heard the voice of Father God saying to Satan: “I will put enmity between you and the woman and her heel will bruise your head.” This was the prophetic message of Mary bearing the Son of God, JESUS who would Redeem and pay the Ransom for our Atonement, through His shed blood on Calvary’s Cross.

The Apostle Paul said the serpent beguiled (or deceived), Eve. (II Corinthians 11:3) Paul knew this was a stern reality for us all and gave multiple warnings to resist him steadfastly in our faith. He uses Eve to show us



all, the ease in which we can be tempted, enticed and drawn away by our own lusts and desires. It can happen to us all...look at King David and Bathsheba from our former story. This is a perfect example.

Reflection Questions

- Read Ephesians 6:10–18. This is the Holy Grail of Spiritual Warfare—the Armor of God. Name the pieces. What are we to put on daily, to defend ourselves against the schemes of Satan?
- Read I Peter 4:12. What does it say will happen to all of us? What does it say to do? Write it here.
- Sin entered the human race through a woman’s disobedience and in stark contrast, Sin was absolved through another woman’s obedience. What does this imply about the way God desires to use women who will yield themselves to Him
- Read Mary’s reply to the angel of the Lord, who gave the message to her, that she would conceive the Son of God, again. What did she immediately say in Luke 1:38? Write what she said here.





Susie Purkey, along with her husband, Mark, has been in full-time ministry for more than 35 years. In that time, they have served as Youth Pastor, Lead Pastor of three different churches and for the last 25 years, missionary evangelists with the Assemblies of God; traveling throughout the US and in over 20 different nations of Europe. There, they conduct city-wide crusades, retreats, and conferences.

By the grace of God, together they have preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to over 1.5 million people and have seen more than 100,000 souls won to Christ.

Susie is a credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God and a 1982 graduate of Central Bible College, in Springfield, Missouri where she majored in Vocal Music Performance and Biblical Studies.

More recently, Susie was appointed to be the Director of Women's Ministries for the Oklahoma District Council of the Assemblies of God and is honored to lead the women in approximately 500 Oklahoma churches - 36 of which are Hispanic. She has a passion for God, family, missions, women and girls and believes in the divine plans God has for us all!

Coming from an unchurched background with three generations of alcoholism and experiencing the touch of God's hand directly, Susie is a gifted speaker, mentor, recording artist, and published author.

She resides in the Oklahoma City area with her family, which includes her two children and two grandchildren who affectionately call her "Nina".

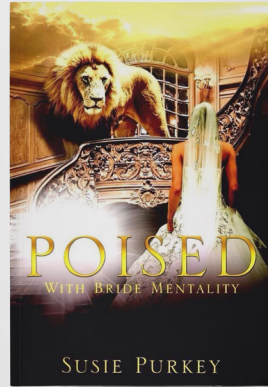
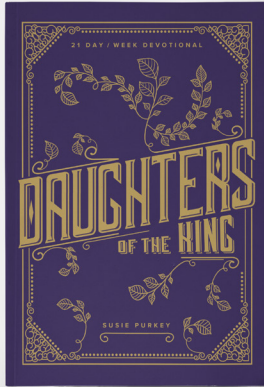


Excerpt From: Purkey, Susie. "Poised."
Xulon Press, 2014-04-03T04:00:00+00:00. iBooks.
This material may be protected by copyright.

Check out this book on the iBooks Store: <https://itun.es/us/TQayY.l>

Susie Purkey
Director of Women's Ministries
Oklahoma District Council
Assemblies of God
Susie.Purkey@okag.org
405.475.1190 (office)





DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

21-DAY / WEEK DEVOTIONAL

Price: \$5 each

Group discount: \$4 each
for 20 or more copies.

Order more copies and
other merchandise at:
[OKAG.org/Women's Ministries](http://OKAG.org/Women's_Ministries)

POISED WITH BRIDE MENTALITY

BOOK AND 9- WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Price: Book \$15 each

Bible Study \$15 each

Or SET: \$25 each

Susie Purkey, 2014 Xulon Press, Inc.

Also available in the iBooks Store.

*All proceeds go to support LIFE (Ladies Investing For Eternity) the mission's arm of the Oklahoma Women's Ministries. Oklahoma District Council of the Assemblies of God







ISBN 978-0-9986966-0-7
9 00000 >



9 780998 696607