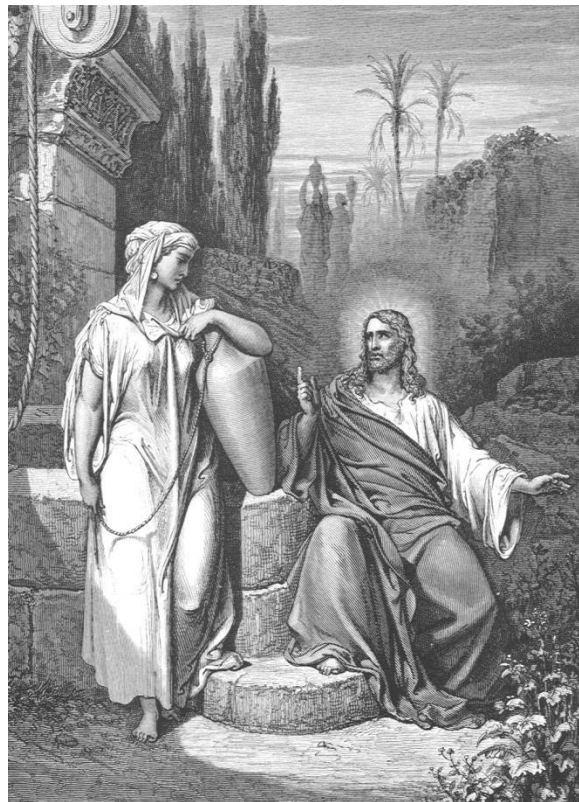


The Legacy of Women in the Bible

Ten Lessons from the Old and New Testaments



By: Frederick Osborn

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FOREWORD

I am honored to have the opportunity to express some of my thoughts about this book's theme and its author. My husband and I often refer to Frederick Osborn in conversations as 'our brother, Fred'. He is truly "family" through the bonds of Christ and a true friend through shared-values. He is a co-laborer in God's Vineyard. I write these comments because of his lived-out beliefs, his practical real-life respect for God's word, and out of my own call of God as a minister, a wife, a co-laborer, a friend, and a sister in the faith.

I have found that many people can write a good book, but not all have the God-given insights or the integrity of real-life belief in what they are writing about. Our brother, Fred, has both. After reading the manuscript, I can already sense how God's Spirit will use this book to not only bless and inspire, but also to transform our understanding of the awesome role that we women have in this journey God has placed before us.

This is a Bible Study with a workbook format but, more importantly, it is about Stories. You will not find a list of characteristics that are applicable to only one culture's understanding of the roles of women in the home, church, and society. But, you will find that the author uses specific, undeniable, truthful stories of women throughout Scripture that lived in dangerous times. Some have lived through decades of doubt and longing as they waited for the fulfillment of God's promises; others lived lives involving frequent risks. But, none of these women were merely appendages or a tag-along to someone else's story. There are great love stories in this book as God calls the hearts of women to join with Him in adventures, challenges, and a life purpose that brought them to His heart.

You will see in these Stories women who are uniquely and wonderfully made, just as each of you are. We know, as Christians, that our identity is given through the Creator God who made us in His own image. Each of us has our own DNA, various giftings, personalities, differing roles, and cultures. Yet, we all receive the Word our God spoke on the 6th day of creation, 'It is not good for man to be alone, I shall make him a 'companion, help-meet, or helper'.

In the book of Genesis, God was setting the stage for the greatest STORY ever written. Eve was his first ANSWER to what He said was 'not good' as it was. When God said it was 'not good', He did not mean it was the opposite, which is 'bad'. The Creator meant that what He created

could only reach its fullest potential and productivity after He had created everything necessary to complete His Divine Plan. The Lord's pronouncement that it is not good for man to be alone reminds us that God is a God of community and relationship. His plan all along was to have a people who would serve Him and be a Light to the Nations. His people were to be a 'picture' of Himself – a reflection of who He was. But something went wrong and sin entered into the story of creation. Sin separated man from God. Ultimately, God repaired the breach that opened up in this relationship, separating man from his Creator. He did this by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, who was a perfect reflection of the Father and a perfect expression of unity with God. The most glorious mystery of this 'reflection' of God is seen through Christ as the Bridegroom united with the Church as the Bride. Therefore, in the woman He created a helper/helpmeet to more beautifully reflect this glorious divine mystery.

I fear the translation of the original text when woman was created is often misunderstood or even worse minimized. Genesis 2:18 says, 'I shall make him an helpmeet (Hebrew: *ezer kenegdo*). This phrase has been notoriously difficult to translate. "*Help meet*" falls short. "*Companion*" seems almost disappointing, because a puppy can be a companion. The Hebrew scholar Robert Alter has gotten quite close, I believe, to what the original text means when he translates it '*sustainer beside him*'. This interesting word, *ezer*, is actually used only 20 other places in the entire Old Testament. And in every other instance, the person being described is not the woman but is God Himself in the sense of when someone needed Him to come through for them desperately! *Kenegdo* means 'alongside' or 'opposite to a counterpart'.

If my God had not stood with me, or if He had not stood beside you, we would all be without Hope, without Life and certainly we would be dead in our sins or, possibly even literally dead! As I said, the stories you read in this book are not stories of a safe life that these great women lived. Some stories in the Bible tell of the downfalls of women who refused to allow God to be their Lord; when difficulties came, they resorted to taking their destinies into their own hands.

If your life were always safe with no serious problems, great quests, or difficult challenges that God asked of you, then you would not desperately need your God – your *ezer*. If your mission in life is to live free of all problems, fears, and doubts, and to only accept tasks that you can do quite well without any outside help, you will not desperately need a Mighty God to be with you. But you will never discover the blessings of intimacy with the Father and power of His

Spirit enabling you to live an extraordinary life like one of these great women in the Bible who left spiritual legacies for generations to follow.

Each of you can be equipped by God to be a ‘sustainer beside’. You can be a lifesaver to your husband, a pillar of strength to your children, a spiritual tower to your friends, and a powerful witness to a watching world that needs to see the reflection of our God (imperfect as we often are) who will sustain and walk along side them. You have a role to play in this Story of life that no one else can fill... if you will give yourself fully to God and allow Him to fulfill His perfect plan for your life.

A woman fully given to God is not striving to become beautiful ‘enough’ nor is she hiding because she is not worthy ‘enough’. God says, “I will quiet you with My love” (Zephaniah 3:17). A woman can allow her soul to be at rest as she trusts in the Love of God for her and walks in the beauty of a godly spirit. You have an irreplaceable role in your own Story that will be seen and read by many in generations to come; that is your legacy. Just as the stories you will read in this book, you too will have a story that lives long after your life.

Rosemary Lester

Part One:

Legacy of Women

of the

Old Testament

1. Introduction

The Virtuous Woman Proverbs 31:10-31

Before we begin studying specific women in the Bible, it would be beneficial for us to look at what the Bible describes as the ideal woman and her place of ministry to her husband and family and to her community.

READ Proverbs 31:10-31. In two or three sentences, describe your first impressions of this passage of Scripture.

How did it make you feel when you read this passage? Were you angry, thinking this was placing an unfair burden upon the woman to meet the demands of her husband, family, household and her community? Were you sad, believing you would never be able to measure up to such a high standard of behavior? Or did it make you feel more determined to increase your efforts to become a woman of virtue? Hopefully, by the time you finish this study of the virtuous woman found in this passage of Proverbs, you will feel none of those emotions, but instead you will feel blessed and

“These precious women are writing their history in the lives of those around them whom they love and serve. Although often weary in their task – for theirs is no forty-hour a week job – they are never weary of their task. They spend their lives unknown by the world in the narrow circle of their home within which they labor unceasingly for God and for others, but they will not lose their reward. God’s eye is upon them as they live out their lives in the orbit of His will amid all the cares, trials, and sorrows of the home. One day, when the books are opened, their devotion will be commended by Him who sees and knows all.”
– Herbert Lockyer

inspired by this great passage of godly wisdom for women who are servants of the Most High God.

THE WORDS OF KING LEMUEL'S MOTHER

Chapter 31 of the book of Proverbs begins with these words: "The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him..." **Read Proverbs 1:1.** Who does it identify as the author of the book of Proverbs? _____

Read Proverbs 30:1 and 31:1. Who are identified as the authors of those chapters? _____

There are two popular views presented by most scholars concerning the identities of these authors: One is that King Solomon was the author and used these names as a literary device to communicate his thoughts; the second view is that these were the writings of several different authors added to the Proverbs either by Solomon himself or later editors of Proverbs. No one knows for sure if Solomon wrote Proverbs 31 himself, or if it was added to his book, but either way, the Divine Author who is behind all Holy Scripture reveals great godly wisdom to all who embrace these words of "King Lemuel's Mother."

If we accept the view that Solomon wrote Proverbs 31, then "King Lemuel" must be Solomon himself. In the Hebrew, "Lemuel" is not used as a formal name, but is more of a nickname a nickname that translates "belonging to God".

Read 2 Samuel 12:24, 25. What is the prophetic name given to Solomon, and what does it mean? _____

"Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants
of the world, both
low and high, rich
and poor together.
My mouth shall
speak wisdom, and
the meditation of
my heart shall give
understanding.
I will incline my ear
to a proverb; I will
disclose my dark
sayings on the harp."
Psalm 49:1-4

Who is King Solomon’s mother? _____

No one is immune to sin. Romans 3:23 reminds us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. The only one who ever walked this earth without sin was Jesus Christ. We may count ourselves fortunate that, unlike Bathsheba, our sins will not be exposed to the entire nation or will be recorded in Scripture for all generations to examine. David and Bathsheba had to endure such exposure; it became a part of David’s ministry when he wrote his powerful and heartfelt prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. David’s words in this Psalm became a model for all of us of what to do with our own failures. It is never God’s will for anyone to sin, and certainly David and Bathsheba would have testified to the fact that it would have been better for them if they had not sinned. But their story also tells us, if anyone truly repents of their sin, God will forgive them and turn that sin into a ministry opportunity. David wrote Psalm 51 as a prayer of repentance, and Bathsheba could tell of the goodness of God in her life in spite of the consequences of her sin with King David. **Read Proverbs 31:1-10 once again. Knowing what you do about Bathsheba’s life, how important would it have been for her to impress upon her son, Solomon, the message of “The Virtuous Wife”?** _____

“ Create in me a
clean heart, O God,
and renew
a steadfast spirit
within me.
Do not cast me away
from Your presence,
and do not take Your
Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy
of Your salvation,
and uphold me with
Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach
transgressors Your
ways,
and sinners shall be
converted to You.”
Psalm 51:10-13

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” Read 1 Kings 11:1-13. Did Solomon follow the motherly wisdom of “King Lemuel”? _____

What was the final outcome of Solomon’s life, and how did his conduct affect his family and his kingdom? _____

Throughout the book of Proverbs, Solomon has much to say about the vices and virtues of women. It may be argued that no man who ever lived had more experience with women than this king and husband of 700 wives and princesses, and 300 concubines! But if Solomon had followed the godly ways of Israel’s spiritual leaders, he would have chosen one wife that was praiseworthy for her diligence, piety and spiritual gifts, which he would have valued more highly than the beauty of the hundreds of “foreign women” who turned his heart away from the one, true God to worship their idols.

*“It is to be regretted that a notorious polygamist like Solomon did not illustrate his own proverb in his own life that, ‘He who finds a wife, finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord’ (Proverbs 8:22).”
Herbert Lockyer*

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN – A WOMAN OF STRENGTH

The Hebrew word, *hayil*, is the word that is translated “virtuous”. It’s root meaning comes from “force”, whether of men, means or other resources. Modern commentaries often miss the original intent of the verse, and emphasize the idea of the virtuous woman being a righteous woman or a woman of moral excellence. But a “*hayil* woman” is recognized first as a woman

of strength, valor, ability, wealth, and substance. Though the weaker vessel in relation to her husband (1 Peter 3:7), the virtuous woman is made strong by the wisdom and grace that begins with the fear of the Lord, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...” Proverbs 1:7a. **Read 1 Timothy 2:9, 10; and 1 Peter 3:1-6. How do those verses of Scriptures compare to Proverbs 31:10-31?** _____

A virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, who has self-control and knows how to manage her household; she does not need to rely upon outward, or worldly adornments to define her beauty, but her “godliness with good works” will reveal an inner quality that enhances her beauty and value far above any earthly jewel. She is the “crown of her husband” and is not a source of embarrassment to him (Proverbs 12:4). The husband’s ministry is dependant upon the virtuous character of his wife. No man can succeed in ministry if his wife’s character is ungodly. At the same time, 1 Peter 3:7 reminds the husband that he cannot expect to have his prayers answered if he abuses his wife and refuses to honor her as “heirs together of the grace of life.”

WHO CAN FIND A VIRTUOUS WIFE?

Such a woman is rare indeed. As we study the verses that detail the character of the woman of virtue, the difficulty of finding a truly virtuous woman becomes apparent. Still, he who desires to marry ought to seek diligently for no less than the highest quality of womanhood God intends for all women to

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7

*“A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty.”
Matthew Henry*

model. In searching for a wife, no man should allow himself to be biased by beauty or adornments, wealth or parentage, dressing well, dancing well, or an ability to entertain. A woman may exhibit all of these on the outside, and still not possess the inner qualities of spiritual strength and commitment to the Lord that will make her the “crown jewel” of the man she marries.

Read Genesis chapter 24:1-28. How does this story of Eliezer’s search for a wife for Isaac compare with Proverbs 31:10? Think about Abraham’s instructions to his servant and what sign the servant asked the Lord to use to lead him to the right woman. _____

NOTE: Handout #2 “Rebekah”

HER WORTH IS FAR ABOVE RUBIES

What is the value of a wife and mother? The woman is the CEO of the home and family. She is the one who rises each morning and works until she collapses into her bed each night. She is cook, childcare worker, psychologist, counselor, nurse, housekeeper, laundress, gardener, organizer, tutor, money manager, and much more. It is primarily the mother who is responsible for the emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, and educational welfare of the children. She must be a partner to her husband and is responsible to handle things in his absence in ways that are not contrary to his own beliefs and feelings. She must be lover and friend to her husband; always mindful of his needs, but not neglecting herself, or her own well-being.

“Listen, O daughter,
consider and incline
your ear;
Forget your own
people also, and your
father’s house;
So the King will
greatly desire your
beauty; because
He is your Lord,
Worship Him.”

Psalm 45:10, 11

The virtuous wife will teach her children by the example of her behavior to be respectful to their father.

Much study has been done in America to calculate what it would cost to hire a person to do all the jobs a wife and mother does in the home. In May of 2006, a CNNMoney.com article said that if a stay-at-home wife was paid for her services to her husband and family she would earn an annual salary of \$134,121.00. **Read Proverbs 3:13-18; 15:6; 20:15; 22:1; 25:11, 12; Matthew 6:21; 12:35; and 2 Corinthians 4:7. According to the Bible, what are the criteria we ought to use to calculate the worth or value that a woman brings to her husband and family?** _____

Each couple will have to decide where they place the value of a wife, and her contributions to the husband, the home, and the family. For some, the income she can bring in is of most importance. For others, it is the intimacy she can provide her husband with. For still others it is her reproductive capabilities. But when the Christian husband considers the value of a wife, he must consider first and foremost, the spiritual contribution the virtuous wife will bring to him and to their children. To the man who finds such a woman, she will prove to be the greatest treasure. **Read Ephesians 5:25-31 & 33. How will a man who treasures his wife treat her?** _____

“The union of husband and wife merges two persons in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean losing your personality in the personality of the other. Instead, it means caring for your spouse as you care for yourself, leaning to anticipate his or her needs, helping the other person become all he or she can be.”

Life Application Bible notes, Ephesians 5:21-33

THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

1. Read Proverbs 31:11, 12, 23, & 28. What do these verses tell us about the virtuous wife and her husband? _____

The virtuous wife will work hard to earn her husband's esteem, affection, and above all, his trust. Because of her godly character, he can trust her to conduct herself with prudence and discretion in all matters. More than not doing him harm, she does him good all the days of her life (31:12). The woman of virtue will add to her husband's reputation in the community; leaders will be able to tell by a man's cheerful countenance and pleasant humor that he has a good wife at home. A good, honest husband will have no difficulty finding praise for his virtuous wife, should he be so fortunate as to obtain one.

2. Read Proverbs 31: 13, 14, 15, 19, 22, &25. What is the attitude and conduct of the virtuous woman towards her work? Note the "action words" of these verses. _____

"But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things."

1 Timothy 3:10, 11

The virtuous woman is diligent in her work and takes pleasure in it. She does not sit at home, waiting for others to serve her. The virtuous wife and mother does not wait for good things to come to her, but goes out and uses her talents to wisely seek for those things that are necessary for the health and well being of her husband and family. If her household does not prosper in the Lord, the virtuous woman does not sit around blaming others for the poor condition of her family, but shoulders her share of the responsibility to provide for her family. And in all she does the Lord will bless her because of her virtue.

3. Read Proverbs 31: 16, 17, 18, & 24. For what purpose does the woman of virtue apply her talents? _____

The point that these verses are making is not that a woman should be a real estate broker, or that she should be about the business of buying vineyards; the point being made here is that a woman of virtue contributes to the income of her household and is a prudent manager over what she has been given. Verse 16 means she is an “evaluator”: she weighs the costs and benefits of things, and makes purchases that she knows will benefit her household and add value to the family assets. Verses 17 & 18 mean she is a hard worker, capable and diligent

“The Creator of heaven and earth – the One with the entire universe and its riches at His disposal – knows you by name, has planned a promised land for you, and longs to bless you. He wisely reserves the right to require your cooperation.”
Beth Moore

of her God-given tasks. The point of verse 24 is not what particular item is sold, but that the virtuous woman will make something for which there is a market. It could be a product like food or handicrafts. It could be a service such as house cleaning or childcare, or it could be a skill like weaving, translating, or bookkeeping. No matter what her station in life, or how much time is available after the family needs are met, the virtuous woman will take every opportunity to enlarge the family's assets.

3. Read verses 21, & 27. These two verses summarize the life and work of the virtuous woman. In one or two sentences, use your own words to summarize the life and work of the virtuous woman. _____

The virtuous woman does not need to fret and worry over the needs of her family. She wisely knows what they need in every season of life and works diligently until they are secured.

4. Read Proverbs 31:20; Deuteronomy 15:8-11; Luke 14:12; and Ephesians 4:28. Besides her husband and family, who else will the virtuous wife care for? _____

The image of the "outstretched hand" indicates that the ministry of the virtuous woman to the poor and needy is done

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12: 2, 3

freely and cheerfully with a heart of compassion. She is not selfishly concerned with meeting only the needs of her own, but like Abraham, knows that God’s purpose to bless His people, is to be a blessing to others less fortunate (Genesis 13:2-3).

5. Read Proverbs 31:26; 14:1 & 8:1- 36. Proverbs 31:26 and 14:1 tell us that the virtuous wife is careful with her words and actions; she speaks wisely and acts with kindness. What other insights about wisdom do you find in 8:1-36? _____

Solomon portrays wisdom as a woman who guides God’s people (8:1-13) and makes them successful rulers over households or kingdoms. Wisdom was present at the creation of the world and works with the Creator (8:22-31. God blesses those who listen to wisdom’s council (8:32-35). Those who hate wisdom court disaster (8:36). Wisdom guides the woman of virtue and affects every aspect of her life.

6. Read Proverbs 31:30; 22:4; Psalm 33:18; 34:7-9 & Isaiah 33:6. What are some of the promised blessings for those who fear the Lord? _____

Happy is the man
who finds wisdom,
and the man who
gains understanding;
for her proceeds are
better than the
profits of silver, and her
gain that fine
gold. She is more
precious than rubies,
and all the things you
may desire cannot
compare with her.”

Proverbs 3:13-15

7. Read Proverbs 31:28, 29, & 31. In what does the virtuous woman find her happiness? _____

Proverbs 31 ends with a clear picture of the blessed life of the woman who lives by the wisdom of King Lemuel's Mother. Far from being weak, harassed, servile, and confined to the home, the woman who fears the Lord possesses an inner strength of character that will keep her on the right path in Godly wisdom.

It is God's desire to bless those who put their trust in Him and obey His commands. When she faithfully follows God's commands and applies her God-given gifts and talents for the benefit of others, the virtuous wife will discover that inner peace and joy comes as she sees her family prosper. She may be of humble circumstances or from great wealth, but no matter what her station in life, she will reap a rich treasure of honor, respect and love from those who matter most to her life. And although she may not feel as though she has been given the praise she deserves, the woman of virtue will remain steadfast and not abandon her God-given duties towards her husband, children and community. The virtuous wife will persevere because she knows the Lord is watching her and she will in due season receive her reward from Him.

Discuss the following statement: "God does not want women to 'be like' or 'imitate' the virtuous woman, He wants women today to become that woman." As you consider your life and labor, is there any area the Lord has pointed out to you that needs to change?

*"Life has not always been easy, but I have been conscious of His presence, comforting me when I have had to face difficulties and giving me strength to do what needed to be done in a particular situation. Although no situation stands out, I am always conscious of the comfort that comes from bringing our worries and concerns before God and leaving them in His hands."
Dr. Patricia Noller,
Psychologist*

2. Eve

The First Woman

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:21-24; 3:1-21

Eve was a woman of many “firsts.” She was the first and only woman born without sin. She was the first woman to live upon the Earth, the first wife, and the first person to face the temptation of Satan. Eve was the first mother and the first mother who experienced the sorrow of having a child killed. Eve was the first woman to work with her hands to provide food and clothing for her family. Eve was the first woman to bear the sorrow of sin, and yet she was the first to receive the Divine prophecy of the triumph of the Cross – and the freedom from sin and death it would bring. We have much to learn from Eve about how to follow God even after we have failed Him.

1. CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” Genesis 2:18

The Bible teaches us that God had a specific plan and purpose for His creation, and He placed Adam and Eve in the very center of that creation as the crowning achievement of His plan. **Before focusing on the story of Eve, read Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:15. What are the four purposes for mankind given by God?**

1. _____
2. _____

“We firmly reject the unproven, anti-Christian theory of evolution, just as we protest that the account of the creation of Adam and Eve, and the temptations of the serpent is ancient myth or folklore conveying withal a pertinent truth or message. It is becoming more common for modernistic preachers and writers to speak of the beautiful fables and myths of the Bible. We believe the first three chapters of Genesis contain historic realities. If Adam is a myth, so is Christ.”
Herbert Lockyer

3.

4.

Genesis chapter one begins with one of the Bible's greatest themes: **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** Everything that follows in the creation story builds upon that theme, and that theme forms the background behind all of God's dealings with mankind. The Bible is unconcerned with explaining HOW God created, but is most concerned with WHY God created all that He did. At the end of each day of creation week, God pronounced that all He did was "good". As Creator, God has the right of ownership over everything He made, including man. Never letting go of man, God grants him freedom to reign and rule over the earth. But his freedom is not without limits.

As the crown of God's creation, mankind bears the unique distinction of being the only creature to bear the express image of their maker. Adam, formed from the dust of the earth, is exalted to a position "a little lower than the angels." But it is "not good" for man to be alone, so God creates the only companion suitable for Adam... a companion who is his equal in every way:

"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."
Genesis 2:23

With his helpmate by his side, it is now possible for Adam to fulfill his divine calling to:

1. Replenish the earth
2. Subdue the earth
3. Dress, till and keep the earth
4. Have dominion over the earth

"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?

For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,

All sheep and oxen – even the beasts of the field,

The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas."

Psalms 8:3-8

2. THE FIRST WOMAN TO BE NAMED

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” Genesis 3:20

Read Genesis 2:23; 5:2; and 3:16, 20. What are the three names given to Eve? And who gave them to her?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The names given to Adam’s wife, Eve distinguished her from all of God’s creation, and foreshadowed the roles of all women who would come after her. Genesis 5:2 reveals that on the day Adam and Eve were created, He called them “Adam”. This Scripture reaffirms Genesis 1:26, 27 where it says God created Man in His image, “male and female He created them.” So it is only possible for Man to reflect the image of God as male and female – a man by himself is NOT the image of God. God created them one flesh and gave them one name because the divine ideal for a man and his wife was not merely to be bound by some kind of legal contract, but was for husband and wife to be united in an indissoluble oneness.

In the first love poem ever written, Adam calls her “Woman, because she was taken out of man.” (Genesis 2:23) The word, “Woman” distinguishes her from the man. She is of man, but she is not the man. Because she is woman (Heb. “*man-is*”), she is not above or below man; she is separate but equal to man. In creation, she has the same status as the male: she is different in emotions, mind, will and body, but remains the spiritual equal to her male counterpart.

“Eve” was the name given to her by her husband after their Fall from innocence. He could have given her any name;

“That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be his beloved.”

Matthew Henry

he could have given his wife a name that marked her as the one who first succumbed to the temptation that ushered in the judgment of God upon Adam and his descendants. He could have reproached Eve as “death” or “fallen”, but instead chose a name that reminded both of them of the promise of God that through the seed of the woman Satan would be crushed and all things would be made right again (Genesis 3:15). So Adam called his wife Eve, “life-giver” or “the mother of all who have life.” Together, Adam and Eve – and all those who came after them – would bear the weight of this Fallen world until the day God’s promise is fulfilled and a “new heaven and new earth” are revealed (Revelation 21:1-5). HANDOUT #3

3. THE FIRST TO BE TEMPTED BY SATAN

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” Genesis 3:1

Creation was complete and the day of Sabbath rest instituted. Adam and Eve, created in the image and likeness of God walked in the Garden with perfect, unstained natures. All of their needs were met; they knew no hunger, thirst or fatigue. Adam and Eve enjoyed direct, unhindered access to God. They experienced the blessings of obedience to God and understood what the consequences would be if they disobeyed. And it was in this atmosphere of perfection, peace and prosperity that Satan came to tempt Eve. HANDOUT #4

Read Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 12-15; and 1 Timothy 2:14. What do these Scriptures tell us about the devil and the methods he uses to tempt people to do evil?

“The temptation was not in itself the wish to transgress, but the will to possess; the transgression is merely a means... If the tempter had said, ‘Steal,’ he would not have been listened to for a moment. But he did not say, ‘Steal!’ he says, ‘Speculate!’... Temptation since the days of Eden has never ceased to clothe itself in a seemly garment.”
George Matheson

Satan and his minions rarely attempt the direct approach to tempt the godly to fall into sin; they prefer to operate using deception and disguise... the truth mixed with a lie or as the angel of light. Eve learned the hard way that in dealing with an enemy who has no respect for the truth, she could not take anything he says at face value. Eve knew the truth, and if she had let God's word be her authority, she could not have been fooled by the Devil's tricks. Once she allowed God's words, God's authority, and God's motives to be questioned, it did not take long for Eve to be led astray by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Adam, for his part was no better. Adam made no effort to prevent Eve from taking and eating the fruit. He knew the prohibition was addressed to him as well as Eve, but when he saw that the fruit was safe to eat, he willingly took his share. And when God confronted Adam about that first act of disobedience, he not only blamed Eve, but God Himself – "The woman You gave me..." There was no escaping what they had done, and there was no place safe to hide from God. All that was left for them to do was face God's judgment.

4. THE FIRST TO BE CURSED BY GOD

"To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" Genesis 3:16

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." 1 Peter 5:8, 9

Eve was the first woman to learn that sin has consequences, and that those consequences can be far more than she ever could have imagined.

Read Genesis 3:7-24. Make a list of the consequences resulting from the sin of Adam and Eve. _____

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” Genesis 3:7

After Adam and Eve sin everything changes. The promise that the man and the woman would acquire wisdom and become as gods through the knowledge of good and evil turned out to be false. Instead, there came over them the realization of what they had done; they had violated God’s sacred command and rebelled against their Maker. Before there was sin, their focus had been upon God. They were unaware of their nakedness and experienced perfect communion with each other and with their God. Before there was sin, there could be no shame, and both nakedness and sexuality were undefiled. Now that the eyes of both of them were opened, their focus was no longer upon God, but on themselves. They were filled with an awful sense of guilt and shame over what they had done; now they wanted to hide from God and from each other.

When confronted by God over their sin they could no longer DENY that it existed. They could no longer AVOID dealing with the issue with God. They were unable to ENDURE the presence of sin in their lives in the presence of a holy God. And they could not TURN BACK and return to where they were before they sinned. There was nowhere else to go. The only response God left to them was to EMBRACE His word, and accept His judgments.

“... and they sewed fig leaves together and made for themselves coverings.” Once their nakedness was exposed by sin, they quickly covered themselves. But like the “filthy rags” of our own self-righteousness, their crude garments of fig leaves could not hide from God the guilt and shame of their rebellion against Him. Adam and Eve could not escape God’s eye of judgment by anything that they fashioned by their own hands.

“Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” It was bad enough for Eve that her sin was laid bare before her Lord, but to add to her injury, Adam fails to defend her or accept responsibility for his own actions; instead Adam blames her for his failure. Eve must have felt betrayed by the one who was supposed to be there by her side, “for better or worse”. The perfect intimacy that Adam and Eve once shared is now broken and distrust enters into human relationships.

Sin causes separation from God, and apart from God, man was helpless to save himself and his dominion from the pain, decay and eventual destruction brought on by that separation. The full weight of the consequences for their sin fell upon Adam and Eve as God placed the curse on man and on his whole environment:

- The woman’s ability to be “fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28) would be accompanied by pain (Gen. 3:16)
- The perfect harmony of the “one flesh” relationship which the woman enjoyed with her husband (Gen. 2:24) would be subject to the conflict of competing wills (Gen. 3:16)
- The earth was cursed because of their sin (Gen. 3:17). And because Adam and his descendents were subject to death and decay (Gen. 3:19), they would no longer be able to exercise perfect dominion over the earth. Unable to dress, till, keep, and replenish the earth as it was

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

Galatians 6:7, 8

intended, their tasks would become more and more difficult. Thorns and thistles would grow along side plants intended to bless men and animals with nourishment. The earth would also suffer from the misuse and abuse from sinful men motivated by greed and lust for wealth and power. From that point forward, toil and sweat would be required to bring forth a harvest (Gen. 3:17-19).

- Animals were sacrificed to provide covering for man (Gen. 3:21). God instituted the shedding of blood for the sins of mankind in the Garden. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 17:11)
- Man is driven out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24). The perfect environment God had created for man was no longer suitable for man in his fallen condition. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden served a three-fold purpose:
 1. God’s justice required punishment
 2. God’s love kept them from the Tree of Life, lest they eat of the Tree and live forever in a fallen condition.
 3. God’s mercy would be found when the conditions of mankind’s fallen estate caused them to realize they were lost and in need of salvation.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

Leviticus 17:11

5. A SAVIOR FROM SIN PROMISED THROUGH EVE

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

The serpent was singled out from all other creatures because as an instrument of Satan, it would be a constant reminder to mankind of his fall from perfection. The curse upon the serpent, and its physical condition (“on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life”) would become a visible sign of the fall of Satan and God’s judgment upon him. The fear and loathing (or enmity) humans feel towards snakes in general are reminders to us to shun evil: “You who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the souls of his saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.” (Psalm 97:10).

Read Galatians 4:4; 1 John 3:8; Luke 1:30-33; Matthew 4:24; 8:16; Luke 4:41; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14, 15. Compare them with Genesis 3:15. Describe how Jesus is the one who fulfilled the prophecy given to Eve. (NOTE:HANDOUT #5) _____

Isaiah chapter 53 is one of the greatest prophetic passages of the Old Testament concerning Jesus Christ. It describes in great detail the suffering – the bruising – of the promised Redeemer of Genesis 3:15. He was to all outward appearances an ordinary man, “... He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is not beauty that we should desire Him” (Verses 2b – 3). But the “man of sorrows”, despised, and rejected by men would be the One chosen by God to crush the

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:4, 5

serpent's head, once and for all; "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Verse 5). And in the end, our salvation is secured because of His humility, suffering, and ultimate triumph on the cross: "By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities... And He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Verses 11b, 12b).

6. EVE WAS THE FIRST WIFE AND MOTHER

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." Genesis 3:20

Adam and Eve were driven out of the perfect protection of the Garden of Eden, towards an uncertain future. From this point forward, whatever they faced, they must face together. There was no concept of divorce for them, but there would never be a more perfect union between husband and wife, for truly Eve was bone of Adam's bone and flesh of Adam's flesh. And Adam knew that soon she would be the first woman to experience the pain of childbirth and the joy of knowing she was the first mother of the human race.

Read Genesis 4:1-8; 4:25, 26; and 5:3-5. **How many children did Adam and Eve have?** _____

What happened to her second-born son? _____

How old was Adam when He died? _____

How old was Eve when she died? _____

The Bible does not tell us how many children Eve bore; just that Adam had "sons and daughters". We do not know the

"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for the joy that a human being has been born into the world."

John 16:21

details of the lives of their children, but we do know that Eve was the first woman to experience the tragic loss of a child and the grief that followed. The Bible tells us that Adam lived 930 years, but does not tell us how long Eve lived; it may well be that Eve was also the first widow, but we will never know.

The fact that the Bible remains silent about the life of Eve after her fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden does not diminish her importance as the “mother of all living”. After her fall, for the rest of the days of her life, she stood by Adam, bore his children, laughed with him and cried with him. She suffered through this Fallen world with him and saw the unraveling of all the “good” God made upon the Earth. Temptation to sin is now a universal experience. But through Eve’s experience, we recognize the schemes of the devil, and know we must resist him at all costs. We learn from Eve that there is no sin in being tempted, but if we chose to yield to temptation, sin and judgment must follow.

“At the heart of Eve’s pathetic story, however, is the moral lesson that a woman has the power for bane or blessing over a man’s life. If she falls, man falls with her.”
Herbert Lockyer

3. Sarah

Mother of the Faithful

Genesis 12:1 – 25:18

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going ... By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.” Hebrews 11:8 & 11

In Eve’s story we saw the power a woman has over her husband’s life. If she falls, her man falls with her. But if in the end she rises to the challenge of God’s special destiny for her life and for her husband, she will receive same blessing as her husband. The story of Sarah is the story of a woman who followed in the footsteps of her husband, who also happened to be a great man of faith. It is because of her husband Abraham that Scripture has more to say about Sarah than it does almost any other woman in the Bible. We will see in our study of Abraham (and Sarah) a flawed and imperfect pursuit of God, but in the end Abraham overcomes every test of faith and is called the father of the faithful. In Sarah, we see another model of faith in God, a faith great enough for her to be named next to Abraham in the “hall of fame” of the faithful in Hebrews chapter 11.

Read Genesis 12:1 – 25:18. Using HANDOUT #6 “OUTLINE: ABRAHAM’S & SARAH’S JOURNEY OF FAITH” Note the highlights of Abraham’s story. Pay close

*“Sarah speaks of that which is in faith, and not by promise, and is free – and therefore is carried on in those who live on God’s promises by faith in Christ, and have that perfect freedom which is alone found in His service, and thus belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem.”
Herbert Lockyer*

attention to Genesis 12:10-20; 16:1- 16; 17:1-22; 18:1-15; 20:1-18; 21:1-21; 23:1-20.

Sarah was a woman of her time and of her culture, which meant she followed her husband wherever he went. She followed Abraham to Canaan, then to Egypt, and back to Canaan. She also followed her husband’s advice and submitted to him even when it may not have been to her personal advantage to do so. **Read 1 Peter 3:1-6. When Peter taught on the subject of a wife’s submission to her husband, in what way was Sarah used as a positive example? How do these verses in 1 Peter compare to Genesis 3:16?** _____

The first ten verses of Genesis 12 describe Abram’s first step in his long journey of faith with God. God called Abram (He has not yet given him a new name) to leave his home in Haran “to a land I will show you.” If Abram obeyed, God would establish a special covenant with him. That covenant would include:

- A promise: “I will make you a great nation; will bless you and make your name great...”
- An obligation: “so that you will be a blessing...”
- A prophecy: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed...”

So Abram gathered up all his possessions and took his wife, Sarai (God has not yet given her a new name) and his nephew,

*“As unto the bow the
cord is,
So unto the man is
the woman.
Though she bends
him, she obeys him,
Though she draws
him, yet she follows,
useless each without
the other!”
Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow*

Lot to the land of Canaan according to God's command. Soon after he arrives in Canaan, the Lord appears to Abraham and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." **Read Genesis 11:30. What was Sarai's condition?** _____

Did the Lord reveal to Abram or Sarai at this point in time where the descendants will come from? _____

The Lord has promised Abram that he will give the land of Canaan to his descendants, but Sarai is barren, and had no child by Abram. As we continue this study, we will see how this problem tests the faith of Abram and Sarai.

Read Genesis 12:10-20. Why did Abram leave Canaan and go to Egypt? _____

What did Abram ask Sarai to do? Was it the right thing for them to do? _____

Did Abram's plan protect Sarai from danger? _____

How did God take care of Sarai in Egypt? _____

"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

Luke 12:4, 5

Before Abram and Sarai could settle in Canaan, they faced the first test of their faith in God. A famine had struck the land, and Abram was forced to seek food and shelter in the land of Egypt. God had not spoken to Abram about leaving Canaan;

Abram decided on his own that retreat from the Promised Land was his best option. But Abram's faith faltered in Egypt. Would God be able to protect him from the Egyptians?

Sarai's physical beauty must have been great, for Abram feared once she was seen, some Egyptian would want to win favor with the Pharaoh by bringing her to him to be possessed by him. He instructed Sarai to tell a half-truth: that she was his sister (Genesis 20:12), but not that she was his wife. That way Abram would not be afraid that he might be murdered for Sarai's sake, but it put Sarai in greater danger. It did not take long for that which Abram feared would happen to take place in fact. Sarai was taken from him and brought to the Pharaoh's house to be one of his wives.

Now the Lord was forced to act on Sarai's behalf. Even when we fail the Lord, He is faithful and true to His promises. When He called Abram, He promised to "bless those who bless you... and curse him who curses you..." And here God demonstrates His faithfulness to Abram and Sarai, bringing a curse upon Pharaoh's house until he realizes the wrong that has been done and restores Sarai to Abram. Not only does Pharaoh restore Sarai, but allows Abram to take all his possessions acquired in Egypt back to Canaan with him. In the end, Abram learned a valuable lesson about trusting in God, but his faith in this area still needed to be perfected.

SARAI AND HAGAR

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai." Genesis 16:1, 2

"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward...' Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"
Genesis 15:1, 5

When Abram went down to Egypt, he failed his first test of faith in God’s ability to protect and defend him according to His prophetic word given to Abram at the beginning of his journey of faith with God (Genesis 12:1-3). Upon his return to Bethel, Abram restores his fellowship with God (Genesis 13:1-4). Once again, God speaks to Abram and confirms His promises to Abram for land and descendants (Genesis 13:14-17).

After his painful separation from Abram, Lot settles near Sodom (Genesis 13:5-13). Soon Lot is in need of rescue after being captured along with the rest of the city by their enemies (Genesis 14:1-12). Abram passes his next major test of faith when he rescues Lot from captivity and takes back the spoils of war captured from Sodom but refuses any reward from the king of Sodom. Instead, Abram shows his loyalty to the Lord by giving a tenth of everything he recovered to Melchizedek king of Salem (Genesis 14:13-24). After these things, the word of the Lord comes to Abram again, and once more the Lord confirms His promises to Abram in a vision in the night (Genesis 15:1-21).

Read Genesis 12:2; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:4, 5. What are the promises of God in the covenant with Abram? What does God say about Sarai? _____

God’s covenant with Abram begins in Haran. There the Lord instructs Abram to go “to a land I will show you.” He promises to bless Abram and make his name great. It is not until

“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations will be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Galatians 3:7-9

after he has entered Canaan that God reveals to Abram, “to your descendants I will give this land.” And it is not until after his sojourn in Egypt and his separation from Lot that the Lord reveals to Abram that the land He has given is for Abram and his descendants “forever”. At the same time God goes on to say that Abram’s descendants would be in number “as the dust of the earth.”

Later Abram is still struggling with the reality that he is childless, and upon asking the Lord if he can make his trusted servant his heir, God specifically states to Abram that the heir “will come from your own body.” Then the Lord shows Abram the night sky filled with the starry host and tells him, “So shall your descendants be.”

It would seem that the obvious question from Abram at this point in time would be, “What about my wife?” If God intended to bless Abram with more descendants from his own body than could be counted, how could this be if Sarai was barren? And yet, Abram never asked the obvious question. But that question must have been in Sarai’s mind. And since Abram was not seeking an answer from God concerning her role in the covenant blessing of descendants beyond number, Sarai devised a plan to help things along. Although she is barren and childless, there is still a way for Sarai to make herself the instrument through which the covenant blessing of descendants from Abram’s body could be fulfilled.

“So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.”
Genesis 16:2

“For we walk by
faith not by sight.”

2 Corinthians 5:7

Read Genesis Chapter 16. What did Sarai say was the cause for her being childless? _____

Before suggesting that her husband take her maidservant as a surrogate mother, did Sarai seek the Lord to see if it was His will? _____

Did Abram seek the Lord to see if this was the way God intended for him to produce an heir? _____

If God did not instruct Sarai or Abram to use the maidservant to produce an heir from Abram's body, then where did the idea come from? _____

Sarai shared in the promises of God with her husband Abram. She was blessed when he was blessed, and she was protected from the same enemies. She knew of the promise of God to Abram to give him the land of Canaan for his descendants that God promised would be as vast in number as the stars in the heavens, and forever. And yet she had no children and was long past childbearing years. To the people of that time and place, a woman's barrenness was a matter of shame. For the childless couple it was a sign that God's blessing was not on the marriage. However, the ancient laws and customs of the Middle East provided a way for a surrogate mother to be chosen so that the shame of the barren wife would be removed and an heir would be produced (SEE HANDOUT #7 "CUSTOM & LAW IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA).

Once Hagar becomes pregnant, what are the immediate consequences for Sarai, Abram, and Hagar? (Note Gen. 16:4, 5, & 6)

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1

Sarai: _____

Abram: _____

Hagar: _____

HAGAR: THE WOMAN WHO SUBMITTED

Nothing is known for certain of Hagar's early life. It is reasonable to assume she was purchased or given to Sarai as a slave while Abram sojourned in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). The Scripture does not say how Hagar felt about the idea of being a surrogate for Sarai. Hagar was purchased to be a "maidservant" for Sarai, not a concubine to her eighty-six year old master, but when commanded to receive Abram into her bed and bear children for him, she had no choice but to submit.

As soon as she knows she is with child by her master, Hagar realizes she carries in her womb the heir Sarai could not conceive. Now the maidservant usurps her mistress' place and acts as if she were a better woman than Sarai. Here Sarai learns the hard way what Solomon would observe centuries later: "He who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent" (Ecclesiastes 10:8). The announcement of the coming heir should have been a cause for

"For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar – for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children – the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all."
Galatians 4:24b - 26

great rejoicing for Abram, but instead he was besieged by the complaints of a woman scorned. Sarai, jealous of Hagar's condition and stinging from the young woman's contempt for her, blamed Abram for what she herself set in motion in the first place. Abram must choose between his beloved wife and the mother of his sole heir. Abram would not place himself between the two bitter rivals and tells Sarai to deal with her maidservant as she pleased. Hagar soon learns that her insolence and her attempt to usurp Sarai's place in Abram's heart and home backfired. Her own mistreatment of Sarai is returned with a vengeance. Sarai dealt so harshly with Hagar that she felt compelled to run away.

“The Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ ” Genesis 16:10

Hagar's flight into the wilderness becomes a significant event in the Bible because it is the first place in Scripture where the mysterious “Angel of the Lord” makes His appearance to a human being (SEE HANDOUT #8 “THE ANGEL OF THE LORD”). **Read Genesis 16:7-16. What did the Angel of the Lord instruct her to do?** _____

What were the promises made to Hagar? _____

“Like many women of today, Hagar had few personal resources. But she did the best she could with what she had and trusted God to protect her... Hagar found herself in a situation over which she had no control. How often modern women feel this same frustration; like Hagar, however, we can remain faithful to God.”
Sue Richards

What was Hagar’s response to her encounter with the Angel of the Lord? _____

Hagar was a woman who had to learn to walk in faith even though she was a victim of circumstances beyond her control. She had no choice when she was sold into slavery as a child. When she was chosen as a surrogate mother for Sarai, she could not refuse her mistress. She could not refuse Abram when she had to substitute for Sarai. And when she tried to run away, she was stopped by the Angel of the Lord and told to return and submit herself once more to Sarai. But in spite of her helplessness, she responded in faith to God. After her encounter with the Angel of the Lord she understood that her life was in the hands of an all-seeing, ever-living God who would secure a blessing for her if she would submit herself in faith to Him.

God’s promises to Abraham to “bless those who bless you” and of the Angel to Hagar that she would give birth to a son are both fulfilled by the birth of Ishmael. God reveals to Abraham that Ishmael is not the child of the promise that “through you all the nations shall be blessed,” nevertheless, God is faithful to His promise to bless Abraham and all his descendants.

SARAH: “THE MOTHER OF NATIONS”

“Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.”
Genesis 17:19

Abraham, Sarai, and Hagar had to live with the consequences of their actions. However, there were long-term consequences they never could have imagined. The child, Ishmael, turned out to be the forefather of the Arab peoples that throughout the centuries have been in conflict with the descendants of their half-brother who came by Sarah’s womb. The headlines today are dominated by reports of conflict between Palestinians (progeny of Ishmael) and the Jews living in the modern state of Israel (progeny of Isaac). And this modern conflict threatens to engulf the entire world.

After the birth of Ishmael, the Lord appeared once again to Abram. And again, God confirms His covenant with Abram.

Read Genesis 17:1-22. What does God confirm about His covenant with Abraham? _____

What more does God reveal about His plans for Abraham and his descendants? _____

What are the signs of His covenant that God gives to Abraham and Sarah? _____

“He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham...”

Psalm 105:7-9a

The way of God is to reveal His plans and purposes to His people one step at a time. This *Progressive Revelation* characterizes the entire Bible: God reveals, and then tests those to whom the revelation is given before a greater revelation is given them. God confirms to Abram that:

1. He has made an everlasting covenant with Abram
2. Abram shall be the father of many nations
3. This covenant will be an everlasting covenant with his descendants

4. The land of Canaan will be an everlasting possession for Abram and his descendants

But there is something more God reveals to Abram at this time, and it concerns his wife, Sarai. God reveals that Sarai shall bear him the son that will be the heir of the covenant blessings promised to Abram and his descendants forever. Ishmael will be blessed because of Abram and will become a great nation, but God's plan will be fulfilled by the one HE has chosen, and not by the child born to Hagar that Abram and Sarai brought into the world by their own actions.

Here God gives Abram two significant signs or symbols of His everlasting covenant with Abram and his descendants yet to be born:

Circumcision – The origins of circumcision are unknown, but the earliest record of the practice dates from about 2300 BC in ancient Egypt where it was used to mark male slaves. Centuries later, the practice had been given a ritual significance for only circumcised priests in Egypt could perform certain religious duties. **GOD TRANSFORMS THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION AND MAKES IT A SIGN OF HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS.** Circumcision is an appropriate sign because:

- The shedding of blood was necessary to validate a covenant between two parties
- An alliance based upon blood-relationship was inviolable because it is a sacred bond
- Reinforced the emphasis of the covenant upon the promised "seed". Circumcision, the "cutting around" of the source of transmission of this "seed" from one generation to the next, was a visual reminder of their complete enclosure within God's protective and productive will.
- Reminder to be holy (see Dr. Henry Morris sidebar)

"The cutting of the foreskin spoke of a surgical removal, a complete separation from the sins of the flesh so widely prevalent in the world around them. Such sins largely centered in the misuse of the male organ in adultery, fornication, and sodomy. As it directly, therefore, symbolized to the Jewish man that he was a member of an elect nation, a peculiar people, distinctly holy before God, in relation to sexual conduct, so it came indirectly to speak of holiness in every phase of life." - Dr. Henry Morris

- The fact that Jewish males were circumcised as soon as possible meant that from birth, they were full participants in the covenant and had the full rights and privileges of heirs to the Promises made to Abraham.

SEE HANDOUT #9 “CIRCUMCISION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.”

Name Change – His name was changed from Abram (“high father”) to Abraham (“father of a multitude”) and Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah (“princess of a multitude”). God bestowed His honor upon Abraham and Sarah by the name change. The new names would also serve to encourage them and confirm their faith in the promises of God to them.

For the very first time, the God of Abraham has specifically designated Sarah as the instrument through which the promised seed of the covenant would come. God’s intention was always to include Sarah, but not until this moment has His intention been fully realized by Abraham and Sarah. **For discussion: why do you think the Lord waited until this time to reveal to Abraham that Sarah was chosen to fulfill His promise to him? How does Genesis 3:15 relate to Sarah?**

“And the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ ”
Genesis 18:13, 14

Genesis chapter 17 concludes with Abraham obeying God by having himself and all the males of his whole household circumcised. Once that step of obedience is complete, the Lord is ready once again to appear to Abraham and this time announce

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor

Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Galatians 3:26-29

that the time has come for Sarah to conceive the child of the promise. **Read Genesis 18:1-15.** What was Sarah's response when she overheard the angel say to her husband that she would be with child? _____

Was her response understandable? _____

What did her response say about her faith in God? _____

What did the Angel of the Lord's response to Sarah reveal about God? _____

The challenge to Abraham and Sarah's faith at this point in time was significant. God had brought them a long way since they left Ur and started their journey of faith with God. They had faced many hardships, trials and disappointments, but through them all, God kept leading them, and encouraging them

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, or he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Hebrews 11:6

every step of the way.

It has been said that God will not give us anything we cannot handle, and although Sarah's laughter within herself revealed a heart struggling to accept in her spirit that which her flesh told her was impossible to happen, God is gracious to anyone whose heart is open to Him. And truly in spite of all the obstacles to her faith in God, Sarah's heart was ready: *"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised"* (Hebrews 11:11). By this point in time Sarah was not leaning on Abraham's faith to sustain her. Sarah had to draw from within her own heart a living faith that was hers alone. And because she was able to do that she was given the ability to bear a child well beyond the time nature had prescribed for her to conceive.

"And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." Genesis 21:1,2

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1-29) and the demoralization of Lot and his family (Gen. 19:30-38), Abraham moves away from Mamre to the South. If Abraham and Sarah had any feelings of a smug, self-righteousness for having survived and prospered in the Lord while others stumbled and fell away, those feelings were wiped out by their failure at Gerar in their dealings with King Abimelech. **Read and compare Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis chapter 20. What is common about Abraham and Sarah's behavior?** _____

"Theirs was no immaculate conception. They had to have relations in order to get pregnant, and that took faith. Faith in its purest form is simply taking God at His word - that what He says will happen really will happen, that what He says He will do, He really will do - and acting accordingly."
Wayne Barber

What was the same about how the Lord was involved? What was different? _____

Compare Abimelech's response with that of the Pharaoh's.

Abraham's faith had been tested once before in Egypt, but he failed the test. At this point in time it would seem that Abraham would have been strong enough to trust God to protect him and Sarah from harm (Note Gen. 20:11), but as is all too often the case, a good man or woman may, not only fall into sin, but relapse into the same sin. But there is hope even for the worst backsliders who repent of their sins and return to the Lord for forgiveness: "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jeremiah 3:22). This story also reminds us that we can trust God to be the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). So in spite of Abraham's backsliding, God does not break his promise to him or to Sarah.

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

2 Corinthians 7:10

“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.’” Genesis 21:9,10

This is the final and inevitable end of the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. Although she had submitted to the Lord’s command and returned to her mistress, Sarah, the simmering feud between the women was never resolved. The birth of Isaac was cause for rejoicing for Abraham and Sarah, but was cause for envy and jealousy for Hagar and for her son, Ishmael. Ishmael’s abuse of his baby half-brother was cause enough for Sarah to demand that both he and her mother be cast out. Once again, Abraham was caught between two factions in his divided household. And once again, God is forced to intervene to restore order (Genesis 21:12).

As painful as it might be for Hagar and Ishmael, the Lord knew that casting them out was necessary to make it clear to all that the blessings of the covenant promised to Abraham’s descendants would be through Isaac, the child of the promise and not through Ishmael, the firstborn. But at the same time, God did not forget His promise to Abraham to bless those that bless him. So to keep His promise, God protects Hagar and Ishmael, and makes of him another great nation.

“Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.” Genesis 23:1, 2

“What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

Genesis 21:17b-18

Sarah's life story is the example of a woman who lived by faith. Throughout her life, she lived by faith in her husband and faith in her God. Sarah learned that God is faithful to those whose hearts are faithful to Him. She was married to Abraham for over a century and although his actions sometimes put her into jeopardy, she remained a great example of the submission Christ calls for women in marriage. Abraham and Sarah were imperfect people and made some bad choices over the years as they learned how to walk in faith. But before the end of her life, Sarah came to understand that nothing is impossible for God (Gen. 18:14). Sarah had to learn the hard way that God does not set His timetable by what we think is the right time. She had to learn patience and trust the Lord to bring about His promises in His time. God does not want us to jump ahead of Him and make things happen on our own... even if that means we must wait a lifetime for it to come to pass.

From Abraham and Sarah we also learn that God is faithful to His promises and will keep them even if we fail to keep ours. Sarah made a bad choice out of desperation in giving Hagar to Abraham to be a surrogate mother to produce an heir. She learned that God will not always interfere with our plans to prevent us from making a mistake, but may instead allow us to live with the consequences for our bad decisions and learn from them. But God's intervention with Pharaoh and again with King Abimelech, and the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael illustrate that God will intervene if any of our mistakes jeopardizes His overall plan.

Sarah's life story also illustrates the importance of keeping one's commitment to your life partner. Sarah's commitment, plus her faithful devotion to Abraham built a lasting relationship with her husband that withstood the pressures of this world.

"God's part is to put forth power; our part is to put forth faith."

Andrew A. Bonar

4. Deborah

The Woman Warrior Judges Chapters 4 & 5

INTRODUCTION: THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

The period of the Judges was a dark and troubled time for the people of Israel. It follows the events recorded in the book of Joshua and continues approximately 300 years, until the death of Samuel, the last Judge of Israel. The period of the Judges includes the books of Judges, Ruth, and most of 1 Samuel. The book of Judges tells the stories of the twelve Judges that ruled in Israel before Samuel appointed Saul as the first king over Israel.

The twelve Judges (eleven men and one woman) described in the book named after them, were special people appointed and anointed by God to act as leaders of the nation before there were kings to rule over them; to be deliverers and redeemers of the people in times of great distress; or to stand in as mediators and administrators in times of peace and prosperity. The best known of the Judges by far are Gideon and Samson. No Sunday School education would be complete without telling the story of Gideon's band of 300 defeating the army of 135,000 Midianites, or of Samson's many conquests and eventual fall at the hands of the lovely Delilah.

What is often overlooked about the book of Judges is that it is less about the heroic actions of a few people than it is

THE CYCLICAL PATTERN OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Throughout the period of the Judges, Israel went through seven cycles of (1) rebelling against God, (2) being overrun by enemy nations, (3) being delivered by a God-fearing judge, (4) remaining loyal to God under that judge, and (5) again forgetting God when the judge died. Christians must be watchful that their lives do not fall into the same pattern of remaining loyal to God only as long as we are near those who are devoted to Him. When we are on our own, or under pressure to compromise with unbelievers, we must be strong not be drawn away from worshiping God in spirit and truth.

about the downward spiral of the entire people of God into moral and spiritual destruction. The people of Israel were supposed to conquer Canaan and reign as prophets and priests in the land promised to Abraham and his descendants 800 years earlier. But instead of being a holy people dedicated to serve a holy God, they chose to disobey and quickly fell into a downward spiral of idolatry followed by defeat, deliverance, and then a short-lived period of being faithful to God before turning back to their idols. The children of Israel discovered in the period of the Judges that those who seek compromise and accommodation with the godless idol worshippers around them would have no inheritance in the Promised Land.

“In those days
there was no king
in Israel;
everyone did what
was right in his
own eyes.”
Judges 21:25

DEBORAH: PROPHETESS, JUDGE, & WARRIOR

“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at the time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” Judges 4:4-5

Read Judges 4 & 5.

What does 4:4-5 tell us about whom Deborah was? _____

“Now Deborah, a prophetess...” Deborah is introduced to us first as a prophetess. The Bible does not tell us when or how she became one, just that at some point in her life she was recognized by the children of Israel as having this ministry. All of the prophets of Israel were specially chosen by God to

communicate His will to the people. They were preachers and spokesmen for the Lord to the people of God, and not like the soothsayers or the prognosticators of the pagan religions.

Read Deuteronomy 18:9-22. List the “abominations” practiced by the Canaanites and contrast them with how prophets of Israel ministered. _____

The Canaanite religion was corrupt, and the people who followed the sinful practices of idol worship were controlled by fear and superstition. Because of this they willingly participated in things that were an affront to the holy God of Israel. Their minds had become so blinded by the spiritual darkness of their religion that they even offered up their own children to be burned to death in sacrifice to their demon gods (“pass through the fire”). The false prophets and priests of the Canaanite religion led the people astray through the use of sorcery and magic; they would conjure spells or call up the dead as evidence of their powers of divination. God would use the children of Israel to execute His divine justice upon those who worshiped false gods and shed innocent blood.

This same passage from Deuteronomy also describes the ministry of the prophet of God. Moses would be God’s model for His prophets; they would come “from among the brethren” – not from outside of Israel – and when the Messiah came, He would be the perfect fulfillment of the prophet of Israel. **Read Judges**

“It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Deuteronomy 9:5

4:6-14 and compare Deborah’s ministry with the ministry of the prophet of God described in Deuteronomy 18:8-22. _____

God raised up Deborah from among the children of Israel and put His words in Her mouth. She was faithful to speak all that God commanded her, and people came and listened to her judgments. Even Barak, a military leader in Israel, heeded the prophetic words of Deborah when she spoke the Lord’s command to him to “Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor...” and understood the consequences of not heeding her words.

How does one know if a prophet is speaking for God? Deuteronomy 18:18-22 answers that question, making it clear that no prophet of God would presume to speak a word in God’s name, which He has not commanded him to speak (**NOTE: 2 Peter 1:19-21**). And no prophet of the Most High God will ever speak in the names of other gods; if a prophet of Israel did so, the Lord commanded that the prophet “shall die.” If the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, but it does not come to pass, it should be obvious to all that the Lord has not spoken it. And there is no reason to be afraid of any prophet that has spoken presumptuously.

Deborah, “the wife of Lapidoth...” Deborah had another important role to fulfill in that she was also a wife. Although she was a respected spiritual leader in the community, she fulfilled her duties to the husband God had given her. True

“I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass... Even from the beginning I have declared it to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol had done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.’”
Isaiah 48:3, 5

spiritual leaders can not be men and women that function apart from any other authority, *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”* (1 Samuel 15:23a). **Read Exodus 20:12; Romans 13:1-3; Colossians 3:18-20; and 1 Peter 3:1-2. What do these verses tell us about Deborah’s behavior towards the God-given authorities around her?** _____

Deborah learned obedience and respected the authorities of mother, father, husband, and the patriarchal leaders of Israel. But above all, she feared God and obeyed His commands. And it is because she respected and accepted those authorities and did not rebel against them, that she was blessed by God and elevated to a position of leadership. Deborah became a model of Godly wisdom and authority and the people trusted her leadership because they saw in her a virtuous woman of godly character.

Read Proverbs 31:11, 12, 23, & 28 and review your notes from Lesson One of this study, “The Virtuous Woman”. What do these verses tell us about the positive effect Deborah’s position as a Judge would have had on her husband? _____

“The reference to Lapidoth may well be included to suggest that while Deborah as a woman may have walked a social tightrope, she did so without in any way behaving inappropriately. She lived as a godly woman, a special woman.”
Sue Richards

Nothing is known about Lapidoth, the husband of Deborah. However, the Bible informs us that the husband has nothing to fear from the Virtuous Wife that the Lord has elevated into a position of leadership. The Lord must have specially chosen Lapidoth to be the husband of Deborah because she never could have fulfilled her destiny and calling from the Lord without the love, advice, encouragement, and covering of her husband. Lapidoth had to be a humble man who was secure in himself and in his manhood. And because he was not jealous of his wife's success, he was happy and blessed by God as he played a support role to a strong woman who led the nation of Israel in times of war and peace.

“And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment...” SEE HANDOUT #10 “THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL.” The Judges of Israel were all unique individuals called into God's service during a troubled time for the nation. After Joshua, the children of Israel settled into the Promised Land, but they left the task of ridding the land of every vestige of idols and those who worshiped them. Ignoring Joshua's warning that turning back from their mandate for complete conquest of Canaan would bring trouble to their doorsteps (Joshua 23:11-13), Israel not only stopped all offensive military operations, but sought to live in peaceful co-existence with them. It did not take long for these defeated foes of Israel to regain their strength and to resent the children of Israel for being what they considered as nothing more than squatters upon ground that rightfully belonged to others.

Not only were there threats to Israel from within Canaan, but also there were threats from nations all around the Promised Land. These nations saw the fertile land of Canaan, and knew that whoever controlled Canaan controlled the important trade

“Therefore, take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations – those that remain among you – and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.”
Joshua 23:11-13

routes from East to West and from North to South. They coveted the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. So they watched and waited for any opportunity to eradicate the Israelites and to take this treasured land for themselves.

Whenever the children of Israel compromised their faith in the One, true God and fell into the sin of idolatry they would become morally and spiritually weak. Israel's jealous enemies from within Canaan and the land-hungry enemies all around them would sense weakness and sooner or later one of them would strike and drive Israel to its knees. After a period of oppression, the people would cry out to God, and He would send a deliverer who would defeat their enemies and return the nation to godliness.

Read Judges 4 & Judges 6:1. Outline the verses using the pattern established for the book of Judges:

1. Israel rebels against God: _____

2. Israel overrun by enemies: _____

3. The God fearing Judge, Deborah, delivers the nation:

4. Israel remains loyal to God under Deborah's leadership: _____

*Living a life of mediocrity with unfulfilled dreams, bearing the scars and burdens of your past, is far from the life that God created you for. He promised you a life of abundance - in everything, not just money - and it is our duty as Christian women to start making a difference in our world. By this I mean your home, your community, your Church, and your place of work because these are the places where you can exercise the greatest amount of influence."
Trish Jones*

5. After the Judge, Deborah, dies, Israel again forgets their God: _____

“Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, ‘Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor...?’”

The story of Deborah reveals to us the truth that God can and does choose women for spiritual leadership. Those who want to rule out women from leadership solely on the basis of their gender must ignore many of the stories of strong women in the Scriptures – especially when it comes to Deborah and her role as a Judge over Israel. At the same time, imbedded in this story is the idea that not every leadership role is appropriate for women since God’s choice for a military commander was Barak. Also implied in Deborah’s call to Barak to take command and confront Sisera’s army was the reluctance on his part to trust and obey the word of the Lord already spoken to him. For when Deborah spoke in a prophetic voice to Barak, she reminding him of something God had already spoken when she asked, “Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded...?”

Read Judges 4:8-10. What was Barak’s response to God’s call to go to battle? _____

How did Deborah respond to Barak’s demand? _____

“Awake, Awake,
Deborah!
Awake, awake, sing
a song!
Arise, Barak,
and lead your
captive away,
O son of Abinoam!”

Judges 5:12

“And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak...”

The Lord kept His promise and again gave the children of Israel the victory over a superior opponent. Judges 4:6, 7, 14 reveal that it was the Lord who gave Barak the time, place, and strategy for victory. However, there would be no glory for Barak in this battle.

“Most blessed among women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; blessed is she among women in tents.” Judges 5:24

Read Judges 4:17-22. Describe in your own words what happens to Sisera after the battle with Israel. _____

Jael’s actions are a complete surprise to everyone. Sisera flees in the direction of Jael’s tent because Jael was the wife of Heber the Kenite. At this time the Kenites were friendly with the Canaanites. So when Sisera arrived at the Kenite camp, he felt safe. Jael invited him in to her tent and the code of hospitality meant she must not only protect him, but offer him food, drink, and a place to rest. It would be totally out of the question for Jael to take any independent action against Sisera that went against the policy of her husband, her family and clan. And it would be unthinkable for a woman of Jael’s humble position to take any action at that time to bind her people to a new alliance with the Israelite cause. And yet that is precisely what Jael did

DEBORAH’S LEGACY FOR TODAY

- Deborah is an example for us that God does gift women for spiritual leadership. At the same time God’s choice of Barak as military commander indicates that not every leadership role is appropriate for women.
- God used Deborah because she proved to be His faithful and obedient servant. Lapidoth and Barak accepted her leadership because she was submitted to God’s authority in every aspect of life.
- Deborah was a woman who did not rebel against her duties as a daughter, wife, and possibly a mother. With Godly wisdom and grace, she balanced her many roles in life. She accepted each responsibility God gave her, and proved her worthiness to lead by her humble obedience to the Lord.

when she took up the hammer and tent spike and ended Sisera's life in such a devious and cruel manner.

Jael's actions may have been a surprise to many, but once Deborah heard the news she praised her because she was doing God's will. Clearly Jael had to be led by the Spirit of God to have overcome every obstacle and objection to her action against Sisera. As it turned out Jael's willingness to respond to God's direction was the fulfillment of Deborah's prophetic word to Barak that because of his lack of responsiveness and confidence in God's word, a woman would get the glory over him for Sisera's destruction. So when Barak was unwilling to obey, God raised up a woman to do the job. And it is Jael's name that has been honored throughout the centuries as the one who by faith overcame her fears and did the Lord's bidding.

JUDGES 5: THE SONG OF DEBORAH

"Then Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam sang on that day..."

Judges 5 is a poetic retelling of the historical narrative of the previous chapter. Hebrew scholars regard *The Song of Deborah* as one of the finest examples of ancient Hebrew poetry in existence. Deborah wrote the song to celebrate the victory that liberated her people from the oppression of their dreaded enemy, the Canaanites.

This poem is another example from Deborah's life story that shows us that with God all things are possible. She was a humble woman that lived in a patriarchal society. There was nothing special or unique about her birth or upbringing. When the time came, she was married to Lapidoth and lived under his covering and protection. However, when God chose her to lead she listened to His voice and obeyed her calling.

"No character in the Old Testament stands out in bolder relief than Deborah - prophetess, ruler, warrior and poetess. Her song is immortal because her life was dedicated to God and her deeds heroic and sublime."

Herbert Lockyer

5. Jezebel

The Stumbling Block

1 Kings 16:29 - 21:38; 2 Kings 9

In order to understand Jezebel and her place in the history of God's people, we must understand the three most important men in her life: Ethbaal, her father and the king of Sidon; Ahab, her husband, and the King of Israel; and Elijah, the prophet of the Lord and her chief adversary. We must also understand Baal worship to know why the Lord hated it and why it had such a strong hold on the people who were supposed to worship the God of Israel only.

READ 1 Kings 16:29-31. What was Ahab's spiritual condition when he became king of Israel? How would that condition have affected his decision to marry Jezebel, an idol worshiper? _____

JEZEBEL AND ETHBAAL

The Scripture only tells us that Jezebel's father was Ethbaal, "king of the Sidonians", but his name and the historical record reveals much more. Ethbaal, means, "A Man of Baal" and

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."
Mark 9:42

history tells us that he was both a priest of Baal and king of the Baal worshippers in Sidon, the dominant city-state in the region of Phoenicia that was situated on Israel's northern border. At that time, the Phoenicians were an outstanding maritime power and were made wealthy through their trade with other nations around the Mediterranean Sea. The King of Sidon was one of the richest and most powerful nobles of Phoenicia. The Sidonians were a cultured people, advanced in the arts for their time. Jezebel's cultured and aristocratic presence would have made a great impression on the poorer and less prestigious Israelite court of King Ahab. More than making her a Princess, Jezebel's father made her a zealous follower of the Baal cult. The worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, his female counterpart, had existed throughout Canaan and Mesopotamia long before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land after their 400 year captivity in Egypt.

READ Numbers 22:41; 25:1-5; and Deuteronomy 4:3. What do these verses tell you about Israel and Baal worship? _____

Baal (“lord” or “master”) was the ancient Canaanite and Mesopotamian god of agriculture. Baal was associated with the storms, rain and thunder; it was he who was in charge of the rain and the weather, and those whose lives depended upon the fertility of the land sought Baal's protection and provision. Two

“From her idolatrous father, a high priest of Ashtaroth, [Jezebel] inherited her fanatical religious enthusiasm which inspired her to exterminate the worship of the true and living God, and almost succeeded in the attempt.”

Herbert Lockyer

sacred rituals were practiced to secure the god's favor and guarantee fertility for their homes, crops and herds. One was the “sacred orgy” in which the people would gather together in a festival of drunkenness and promiscuous sex. They believed that by acting out acts of reproduction before their gods, Baal and Asherah, it would mean success in childbearing, breeding animals, and growing crops. The second sacred ritual was child sacrifice. A fire was lit inside a metal idol; it heated the idol until it was white hot, and then the living baby would be placed in the arms of the idol or slid inside the idol and burned to death. This was supposed to be an act of supreme adoration to their god for they sacrificed that which was most valuable to them in the world – their child – to their god. SEE HANDOUT #11: “REBUILDING JERICHO”

JEZEBEL AND AHAB

Ahab is often described as a spineless puppet in the hands of Jezebel. However, as the king of Israel, he could hardly have been so weak. Twice he went to war with Syria's King Benhadad II, and twice defeated him. He proved himself to be a skilled military man and was respected as a capable leader. Ahab forged alliances with kings that defeated the Assyrians under Shalmaneser II at Qarqar in 853 B.C.; and he was able to contribute more horses and chariots to the alliance than any other ruler. Ahab worked out an alliance with King Jehoshaphat of Judah, securing peace on his southern border. Then he turned to the north and through his marriage with the royal house of Sidon, secured peace on his northern border. Yet for all his strengths and accomplishments as a leader of his people, in the end, it was his wife, Jezebel, that dominated Israel during his reign.

READ 1 Kings 16:32, 33; 18:1-19. What role did Ahab play in Jezebel's scheme to wipe out the Prophets of

“My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, And your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lay hold of hell.”
Proverbs 5:1-5

the Lord, God of Israel and make Baal the religion of the land? _____

Read 1 Kings 21:1-16. What did Ahab want? _____

What was Ahab's response when he did not get what he wanted? _____

What did Jezebel do? _____

This incident, recorded in 1 Kings 21, more than any other, reveals the relationship between the two rulers of Israel. Ahab was the king, but still had some reservations about going against God's commandments. According to the Law of Moses, Naboth was within his legal rights not to sell the land of his ancestors to anyone that was not family. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and when he could not have it, he became sullen and sulked on his bed like a little child. Jezebel, on the other hand, had no respect for the Law of Moses; she came from a land where the king's authority was absolute and she had no

*"His culpability in this hideous drama lies chiefly in his using his personal power as a means to Jezebel's wicked ends. For without Ahab's authority, Jezebel would have been a serpent without fangs."
Mary Hallet*

reservations about wielding royal power in any way it suited her. Ahab could choose between doing what was right in the sight of God and drop the whole matter, or allow his wife to carry out her wicked scheme to destroy Naboth and take his vineyard by force. But the pattern of compromise and apostasy in the life of Ahab was already well established and Jezebel was ready to fulfill her role and once again push Ahab over the line to sell himself to do evil in the sight of God.

JEZEBEL AND ELIJAH

Read 1 Kings 17:1-7; 18:20-19:3; 21:17-29. Describe the three major events when Elijah confronts King Ahab and Jezebel:

1 Kings 17:1-7 _____

18:20 – 19:3 _____

21:17 – 29 _____

*"...Jezebel means, 'chaste, free from carnal connection'; but by nature she was a most licentious woman. She was a voluptuary, with all the tawdry arts of a wanton woman. Thus no name could have been more inappropriate for such a despised female."
Herbert Lockyer*

What were their sins? (Note also the effect the sins of Ahab and Jezebel have upon the nation.) _____

What judgment does God pronounce on them? _____

Ahab started his reign on the wrong foot, for he followed in the way of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, and worshipped the golden calf idols that Israel's first king, Jeroboam, set up at Dan and Bethel. His heart was full of compromise and wavered between worship of Yahweh in spirit and truth and the worship of false idols. That was, of course, until Jezebel came into his life.

Jezebel was completely devoted to the worship of her fathers' god, Baal. Once she was joined to Ahab in marriage, she easily managed to destroy his halfhearted devotion to the God of Israel, and convinced him to join her campaign to make Baal the god of the northern kingdom. Using her position and power as Ahab's Queen, she ordered the execution of the prophets of God in the land. In the meantime, Ahab set up an altar and temple for Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

The people of Israel quickly followed the lead of Ahab and Jezebel. Partly out of fear and superstition, and partly

"So that Jezebel's destruction may be looked upon as typical of the destruction of idolaters and persecutors, especially that great whore, that mother of harlots, that hath made herself drunk with the blood of saints and the nations drunk with the wine of her fornications, when God shall put it into the heart of the kings of the earth to hate her Revelation 17:5, 6; Revelation 16."

Matthew Henry

because of its wild and promiscuous sexual festivities, the Baal cult quickly took root in the Promised Land. God responded to the threat posed by the Baal cult and raised up the great prophet, Elijah to confront Ahab and Jezebel. There were three dramatic turning points in the confrontations between Elijah and Jezebel:

- The first was when Elijah proclaimed a drought upon the land. This was important because those who worshiped Baal believed he was the god who brought the rains and the bountiful harvest. By stating that there would be no rain except at the word of the Prophet of Yahweh, Elijah was saying that the Lord God of Israel was the true God and not Baal. Jezebel and the prophets of Baal would have to face the fact that they were powerless against the God of Israel.
- The second turning point came when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the people to take a stand and follow whoever was the true God. Once the Lord proved Himself by consuming the sacrifice upon the altar prepared by Elijah, the prophet was able to lead the people in a revolt against the prophets of the false god, Baal, and his consort, Ashtoreth, and 850 of them were slain on that day.
- The third and final confrontation between Elijah and Ahab and Jezebel came after the horrible injustice that was done to innocent Naboth. Elijah pronounced God's condemnation of Ahab and Jezebel; God's justice would be swift and terrible. Ahab feared God in the end and because of that, he was spared from having to see the calamity that God would bring upon his house. But Jezebel would remain unrepentant and defiant until the bitter end.

Why did Jezebel call Jehu, "Zimri" in 2 Kings 9:31?

Zimri was an army commander who, some 40 years earlier, had killed Elah and then had declared himself king of Israel (1 Kings 16:8-10); Jezebel was accusing Jehu of the same treachery.

Read 1 Kings 21:17-29 again and 1 Kings 19:15-18. Compare those passages to 2 Kings 9 & 10:1-28. How is the prophetic word of God spoken through Elijah fulfilled in 2 Kings 9 and 10? Note how the events described demonstrate the power of the God of Israel over the false god Baal. _____

During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal worship had taken over the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. Although a remnant of the servants of God remained in the land (1 Kings 19:18), mostly through Jezebel's efforts, Baal had become the national religion. With Ahab's consent, Jezebel began a campaign of terror and murder to eradicate the servants of Yahweh from the entire land of Israel. 2 Kings 10:18-28 describes the destruction of Baal from Israel. Baal worship overtook Israel through murder and deception, and when the time of God's judgment arrived, it was by murder and deception that the servants of Baal were wiped out. Jehu was the brutal instrument through whom God would fulfill the prophetic word spoken through Elijah.

Review Lesson 1, *The Virtuous Woman: Proverbs 31*. Contrast the influence and blessings the woman of virtue brings to her husband, family, and community with all that Jezebel did.

“Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...”
Hebrews 10:23-24

What a different story would have been written about Ahab's reign if only Jezebel had been a woman of virtue who knew how to stir up her husband and children to love God and follow good works. However it was her evil and twisted heart that caused her to use her beauty, wealth, charms, talents, and royal power to misdirect her husband and the nation. Ultimately, her sins brought down her husband, her family, and herself. And in the end her legacy was not that of a woman, "chaste, and free from carnal connection", as her name implies, but is that of a destructive and evil woman who would stop at nothing to achieve her wicked ends.

*"Live happily with
the woman you love
through the fleeting
days of life,
for the wife
God gives you
is your best reward
down here for all
your earthly toil."*

*Ecclesiastes 9:9
(TLB)*

Conclusion to Part One

In Part One of our study, we have chosen to examine the lives of five very different women from the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. Each had their own struggles with temptations and sin; each had different circumstances to face; and each came from different backgrounds. And yet each of these women left a legacy for us – for good or for bad – from their encounters with God.

From our study of the Virtuous Woman, we learned that it is God's desire to bless those who put their trust in Him and obey His commands. When a woman of virtue faithfully follows God's commands and applies her God-given gifts and talents for the benefit of her husband and family, she will discover an inner peace and joy that comes when she sees her family prosper. She may be poor by the standards of this world, but she is rich by godly standards because she has a rich treasure of respect and love from those she cares most about. The virtuous wife will always persevere because she knows the Lord is watching over her and in the end, her reward is from Him.

Eve's story is that of a woman who experienced all of heartaches of this Fallen and sin-stained existence. She was the first woman to face an uncertain future apart from the perfection of the Garden of Eden. She had the joy of knowing she was the first mother of the human race, but was also the first woman to experience the pain of childbirth. She was the first woman to submit to her husband in marriage. The first woman to deal with the death of a child. After the Fall, and for the rest of her life, Eve stood by her husband, Adam. She bore his children, laughed with him and cried with him as they saw all that was created “good” unravel because of sin. Temptation to sin is now a universal experience. But through Eve's experience we recognize the schemes of the devil, and know we must resist him at all costs. We learn from Eve that there is no sin in being tempted, but if we yield to temptation, sin and judgment must follow.

Sarah was a woman who learned what it means to live by faith; she lived by faith in her husband and faith in her husband's God. Sarah learned along with her husband, Abraham, how to trust in God and how to walk in faith. She had to learn patience and that God will fulfill His promises in His own time. Through it all, she learned in the end, that God is faithful to those whose hearts are faithful to Him, and that nothing is impossible for God. Sarah's commitment to God, plus her steadfast devotion to Abraham, built in her a faith that withstood all the trials and temptations of this world.

The story of Deborah in the book of Judges is the story of a woman who was used by God to win a great victory over the enemies of her people. Because she believed God and took Him at His word, she was used by God to liberate her people from the oppression of their dreaded enemy. Deborah was a humble woman who lived in a patriarchal society. There was nothing special or unique about her when God called her. When the call came, she was married and lived under her husband's covering and protection. However, when God chose her to lead she listened to His voice and did not hesitate to obey her calling.

Our study closed with the story of a woman who was the direct opposite of the Virtuous Woman we learned about at the beginning of this study of women in the Old Testament. Jezebel was a woman who possessed all the beauty, wealth, charm, and talent this world has to offer. She was of royal blood, but her evil and twisted heart caused her to misdirect her husband and the nation God entrusted to his care. Instead of a blessing, Jezebel brought the curse of sin and idolatry that brought down her husband and family. Jezebel almost wrecked the whole nation because of her evil influence. Her legacy is that of an evil and destructive woman who would stop at nothing to accomplish her wicked plans.

The women we have studied in the Old Testament Scriptures teach us of the tremendous influence for good or evil wives have over the lives of their husbands, children and their nation. They teach us what it means to be submissive to God and their husbands, and that obedience is a sign of strength and godly character that brings great rewards, honor and blessings upon them and all that are under their influence. The ministries of these women were absolutely critical to the lives of their families and their nation and the legacies of women in this world should never be underestimated or taken for granted by the men in their lives.

END PART ONE: OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS

Part Two:

Legacy of Women

in the

New Testament

Part Two: Women of the New Testament

INTRODUCTION: JESUS & WOMEN

Before we begin our study of the Ministry of Women in the New Testament, it is important to note that the stories in the Gospels clearly reflect the patriarchal society of first century Palestine. Daughters are mentioned 24 times in the Gospels, sons 327 times. Mothers are mentioned 72 times, fathers 293 times. The words “woman” or “women” occur 78 times; “man” or “men” are used 295 times. Although there can be no doubt that the society portrayed in the Gospels was patriarchal, there is also no doubt that women played a key role in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a matter of fact that every time Jesus came in contact with women in the Gospels that contact inevitably lifted them and granted them a significance and dignity that was denied them in their society.

Jesus did not come to directly confront the patriarchal structure of the Jewish culture, but He did interact with women in ways that challenged the contemporary views of rabbinic Judaism. Jesus saw the great value His Father placed in women and the significance that they were denied in their society. Jesus' encounters with women were intended to be transformational; and the Gospel writers were faithful to include in their accounts how Jesus liberated women and lifted them to equality unknown to first century women. His coming brought a spiritual redemption for women that not only restored them to a position of equality before the Father, but also restored them to the equality with men that they were intended to enjoy from the beginning.

“The current debate on the role of women is focused on a few passages in the Epistles of Paul. However, to interpret them correctly we must realize that a startling redemptive and transformational process is initiated in the Gospels.”

Sue and Larry Richards

Unfortunately, in a study of this kind, there is no way we can do a detailed study of every woman Jesus knew and met (HANDOUT #13: THE WOMEN JESUS KNEW AND MET and HANDOUT #14: THE WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE EVENTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS), but we will begin Part Two of this study of *The Legacy of Women in the Bible*, by examining the lives of several women who had close encounters with Jesus of Nazareth during His short earthly ministry to see how Jesus' encounters with them changed their lives and prepared them to leave a legacy of faith, hope, and devotion for others to follow. Next we will examine the lives and ministries of the women of the early church in the book of Acts. From there we will study how Paul's letters, and the other writings addressed to the New Testament church, defined the ministries of women in light of the Gospels and Acts. Finally, we will bring our study full circle and close with an esoteric study of the "Bride of Christ" (NOTE: we began our study with "The Virtuous Woman").

6. Mary

The Mother of Jesus

Matthew 1; 2; 12:46-50; 13:55

Mark 3:31-35

Luke 1; 2; 8:19, 20

John 2:1-11; 7:5; 19:25-27

Acts 1:14

Of all the women in the Bible, Mary is the one who is honored by Christians above them all. Since the time the Gospel story was first told, countless millions of people around the world have named their daughters “Mary” or some variation of the Hebrew, “Miriam”; and it is one of the few names that has a masculine counterpart, making it a popular name for boys as well as girls. The name Mary was popular in first century Palestine, so it is not surprising that we find more than one “Mary” mentioned in the New Testament. It is this popularity, and the supreme eminence of Mary, which is held by so many around the world, that makes any study of Mary's life and ministry difficult to complete without entering into one of the many controversies surrounding her role as the mother of the Son of God. The dogmatic super-eminence and the overly sentimental exaggerations of Mary's life held by some believers is one of the primary reasons Roman Catholics and Protestants are divided.

“...The virgin's name was Mary.

And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'

Luke 1:27b, 28

For the purpose of our lesson on Mary, the mother of Jesus, we will use only Scriptures from the Gospels to describe Mary. In this study we will discover Mary's life and ministry, and how we can relate to her humanity. Mary was one of a long line of extraordinary women of faith found in the Bible; she was a wife, a mother, and a servant of her God. Her example is one that we all should follow.

Read Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38. What do these verses tell you about Mary's selection to be the mother of the Son of God? Note: her humility, her social position, her holiness, and obedience. _____

By all the standards of this world, Mary was a most unlikely candidate to be the mother of the King of kings and Lord of lords. She was young and was born into a poor family with no social standing, and no power or prestige. There was nothing great about her and nothing to distinguish her from any of the other young girls of any Jewish household of the time. Typical of women in her day, she would not have been given the same education or training in the Scriptures that the males of the households were given.

Mary's selection is reminiscent of the selection of her distant ancestor, the shepherd boy, David, to be King over all of Israel. Just as then, God did not look upon the outward qualifications of Mary, but looked into her heart and found there a heart of faithfulness and willing obedience to His call

“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 man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’”

1 Samuel 16:7

to a most unusual and difficult task. Mary, the simple village girl betrothed to Joseph, was old enough to know how babies are conceived. The angel's appearance and announcement to Mary was a sign to her that the conception and birth of her child would be a supernatural event beyond human logic and reason, but when presented with this divine call to bear the Child, Immanuel ("God with us"), she accepted it with a pure heart full of reverence and faith. SEE HANDOUT #14 "Mary's Calling"

THE SONG OF MARY

Read Luke 1:39-56. Why did Mary go to visit Elizabeth?
(Note 1:36, 37). _____

What was Elizabeth's reaction upon seeing Mary? _____

How did Mary respond after meeting Elizabeth? _____

The angel, Gabriel' said as a sign to Mary, her relative, Elizabeth, was going to have a child in her old age (Luke 1:36, 37). Luke informs us that Mary "got ready and hurried" to visit Elizabeth (Luke is implying from his narrative that Mary went to Elizabeth to confirm the angel's message to her). Once Mary arrived at Elizabeth's house, Elizabeth's condition confirmed the angel's message to her.

*"Let us seek after that union with God which is the height of blessedness, both in this life and in the next, and in virtue of which God becomes the companion of the soul in its earthly pilgrimage."
F. B. Meyer*

The angel's word to Mary was confirmed again when Mary greeted Elizabeth and the baby leaped in her womb (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit at that moment and spoke prophetically (Luke 1:42-45). By calling Mary, "the mother of my Lord," she confirmed the word of the Lord to Mary a third time. The realization that she had been uniquely chosen from among all women to bear God's son caused her to be filled with great joy and to burst out in song. SEE HANDOUT #15 "Famous Songs in the Bible".

Read Luke 1:46-56. Mary's situation had not changed; she was still in the awkward position of being pregnant and unmarried in a time and place where this was a disgraceful condition for any woman to be in. What does Mary's song tell you about her state of mind as she faced the greatest challenge the Lord could have asked a young Jewish woman to face? _____

How does Mary's faith encourage you as you face challenges in your life? _____

Mary's song is an excellent example of Hebrew poetry; a polished gem expressing both praise and submission to God. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the expectant mother Mary, rejoiced over what had happened to her in a perfect blend of poetry and prophecy that could match any Psalm of

"The word glorify means 'to make large, to increase and grow.' More than anything else, Mary wanted to honor God more and more in her life. She also rejoiced in God her Savior."

From the
"Knowing Jesus
Study Bible"

David or the words of any of the greatest prophets of Israel. Her song was deeply rooted in the Scriptures that were taught to her in rhyme, and recited by her since early childhood. First she confessed her understanding of God as her Savior and the revelation that God had selected her to be blessed for all generations (Luke 1:46-48). She continues to describe her Lord, the God of Israel, and reflects upon His mighty works on behalf of His people (Luke 1:49-53). She closes her song (Luke 1:54, 55), remembering God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham and his descendants forever. Woven together with an innate skill and craft, Mary carefully memorized the lyrics of her song and tenderly sang them all her life until Luke wrote them down for all generations to share.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and was able to return home, confident that the word of the Lord spoken through his angel was faithful and true. Her heart was filled to overflowing with the love of God; and knowing that her life was truly in God's hands, gave Mary, the humble village girl, the courage she needed to fulfill her ministries as a wife, mother, and a servant of God.

MARY, THE WIFE OF JOSEPH

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.” Luke 1:26-27

The Gospels tell us very little about Mary and Joseph's relationship. We know it was common practice of the Jews of that time for young girls to be betrothed to older men who had established themselves as able to support a family, and tradition

Mary's song is often called the Magnificat, which is the first word in the Latin translation of this passage. Throughout the history of the church, Mary's song has often been used as the basis for some of Christendom's greatest choral music and hymns.

upholds the idea that Joseph was much older than Mary when they married. Since none of the Gospel writers were concerned about Jesus' childhood, and since Joseph died by the time Jesus began His public ministry, he is not mentioned after Jesus is twelve years old (Luke 2:41-51). SEE HANDOUT #16 "Joseph". We can conclude from the Scriptures that Joseph was Mary's husband for some time because lived long enough to teach his eldest son, Jesus, his carpenter's trade (Matthew 13:55 & Mark 6:3).

Joseph knew Mary was someone special from the moment an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that the child she was carrying was conceived of the Holy Spirit. And Mary must have known that Joseph was a kind and just man because his first reaction upon hearing the news was not to angrily denounce her, or try to defend his honor by calling for her to be publicly humiliated, which would save his own reputation at her expense (Compare Joseph's reaction to Adam's in Genesis 3:12). Instead he chose a quiet, private way to void the marriage contract that he had entered into a way that might give Mary some protection from severe punishment. This bond of mutual trust and submission to God sealed Joseph and Mary's lifelong relationship. This relationship developed into a healthy and normal marriage between Mary and Joseph that produced a large number of additional children. Matthew specifically mentions four brothers – James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (not Iscariot) – and an unknown number of sisters (Matthew 13:55; John 7:3-5).

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

*"Joseph gave no thought to his personal reputation or the fact that the community might conclude that he and Mary had had sexual relations before the marriage. Joseph loved and trusted God and was willing to obey Him in this vital quality, Joseph and Mary, despite any disparity in age, were well matched."
Sue & Larry Richards*

Mary not only bore Jesus, but she also mothered Him for thirty years; from birth to manhood, Mary did everything a devoted mother could do for the Son whom she knew as no ordinary man. Without neglecting her motherly role to the other sons and daughters she bore, she fulfilled the unique, divine calling she received – along with Joseph – to be the primary character-forming influence in Jesus' life. From a worldly perspective, Mary had very little to give her son. The wife of a humble carpenter, she had no power, wealth, or influence to help her Son. But the divine purpose in choosing Mary to be the mother of Jesus became evident as Jesus “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

Read Matthew 2:19, 20; Luke 2:6, 7; & 21-52. What did Mary give to Jesus? _____

First of all, Mary gave Jesus life. Jesus, the incarnation of Deity in human form, entered this world through Mary's womb. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh; until He was weaned, her warm milk nourished Him. Along with Joseph, Mary gave Jesus a home. The house of Mary and Joseph was far from being a kings' palace. Jesus, the King of kings, was not surrounded by wealth; he was not clothed in fine garments; he did not savor delicacies

“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Luke 2:34b-35

from around the world for His supper. He grew up in a humble home where what was most important for Him were the things that money cannot purchase. Because of His mother, Mary, Jesus' home here on earth was a secure environment, filled with godly peace, divine love, righteousness, trust, and sympathetic understanding. Mary's purity of heart made her home a model for Jesus of the home created by the righteous wife and mother described in Proverbs 31.

MARY, THE BELIEVER

Read Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-34; Luke 8:19, 20; John 2:1-11; 7:5; 19:25-27; & Acts 1:14. From the beginning , Mary knew that her firstborn child was special, but what do these passages reveal about Mary's understanding of who Jesus was? _____

Mary knew her firstborn son, was no ordinary child:

- From the angel's pronouncement that her Son would be conceived of the Holy Spirit “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest... and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:26-38)
- From her visit with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56)
- From the circumstances of His birth and His presentation at the temple (Luke 2:1-39)
- And from His boyhood visit to the temple (Luke 2:41-50)

“But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.”
Luke 10:5-6

At the same time, Jesus was raised no different than any of Joseph and Mary's other children (Luke 2:51). He was trained by Joseph to follow in the carpenter's trade, and Mary nurtured Him in the home. But when the time came for Jesus to step out as a Man and set out upon His heavenly Father's business, Mary's relationship with Jesus would change forever. Shortly after His baptism, John describes an incident that is significant not only because it is Jesus' first public miracle, but also because it shows the first step in the changing relationship between Mary and her Son, Jesus.

Jesus' baptism marks His transition from being known as the son of Joseph and Mary into being Jesus, the Son of God. He returns from His wilderness experience and being tempted by the devil, determined and single minded in His mission to accomplish all that the Father had predestined Him for from before the beginning (Colossians 1:15-20). On the way back to Galilee, Jesus stopped to partake in a wedding celebration being held in Cana. Mary was there, and when the wine ran out, she told her son, expecting him to do something about it. Jesus' response ("Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?") to her urgent demand for Him to do something must have shocked her. Jesus addressed her as "woman" and not as "mother" distancing Himself from her. Then He goes further and tells her that His concerns are no longer hers. Now Mary will have to understand that her concerns as a mother are no longer the concerns of her son; she must accept the realization that her Son is no longer under her influence and is now about His heavenly Father's business, and not his earthly mother's.

Read Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21 again. When you became a Christian, how did it affect your relationships with your family and friends? _____

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

Colossians 1:15-18

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each described another pivotal moment in the relationship between Jesus and Mary. Jesus' name and reputation had spread throughout the land. Not only was He drawing large crowds, but He was also drawing strong opposition from the religious leaders of the Jews. They clearly described what amounted to a family delegation of His brothers and mother who had come to meet with Him in private and question Him: "For even His brothers did not believe Him," (John 7:5). Jesus refused to interrupt what He was doing and go to His Mother and brothers. His answer, looking at the crowd, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35), indicated that Jesus Had stepped beyond bonds of the human family relationships, and had opened His arms to embrace as family, anyone who put His trust in Him as the Savior sent by God. Mary was then faced with the fact that if her relationship with Jesus was to continue, she could no longer expect Him obey her as the firstborn Son of her womb, but that she would have to respect Him as the Son of God. (Note the difference between Luke 2:49-52 and Luke 8:19-21).

*"When I became a Christian... other relationships supplanted my family relationships. Though I still dearly love my family, my Christian family is more important. We are knit together by something stronger than human blood: the blood of Jesus Christ."
Rodney L. Cooper*

Read John 19:25-27 and Acts 1:14. At what point did Mary start to worship Jesus as the one and only Son of God? _____

The Scriptures do not specifically state at what point Mary became a believer in Jesus Christ. Throughout Jesus'

earthly existence, Mary did not fully understand the importance of her son's life, ministry, and teachings. She had conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit and instructed by the angel to name her son "Jesus" (Savior). She had also been told that the "Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Mary had to "ponder in her heart" many of the things that had been told to her about her special son. Yet, as he hung on the cross, Mary still could not have fully understood the events that would soon take place. It seems that only after the resurrection did the full reality of Jesus' mission and the true essence of His nature as God's Son dawn upon Mary along with the rest of His disciples.

We don't know where Mary was after Jesus was buried in the tomb. She may have been grieving and too deep in mourning to go to the tomb with the other women the morning after the Passover, and the Gospels never tell us at what point she was informed that Jesus was alive and risen from the tomb. But we do have one last glimpse of Mary "in prayer and supplication along with the other believers, in the Book of Acts (1:14). By the time Jesus had ascended into heaven and returned to His place on the throne, Mary's faith was complete. She took her place alongside the earliest believers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

CONCLUSION

Mary's life is an example for every believer to study and follow. God chose Mary for an extraordinary ministry – to be the mother of God's own Son – because He saw in her a young woman who kept herself pure. When asked to be the vessel that God would use to bring forth His only begotten Son, Mary responded in faith. Mary accepted her role as the virgin mother even though she risked being rejected by Joseph and her family and being ostracized by her community. The

"Nothing in our physical birth or environment determines our relationship to God – only our response to his Word."

Trent C. Butler

"Mary's Son is alive forevermore, and life has changed for her. So she takes her place among those awaiting the coming of the Spirit to equip them for the beginning of the Christian community."

Herbert Lockyer

Mary of the Scriptures is not the superhuman “Queen of heaven” elevated in some traditions almost to the status of a godlike being worthy of worship, but she is nonetheless, an exemplar of faith in God.

In the end, we see Mary as a woman by whose example all are blessed and should be encouraged to follow. Every believer should strive to have a faith as great as Mary's. for the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Mary is a model believer – a sister in Christ – to be admired for her faith, appreciated for her ministry to her son – the Son of God – and honored for her legacy of obedience and virtue. She takes her place, not as the head of the early church, but alongside the other believers of the fledgling church, waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Mary is a model believer – a sister in Christ – to be admired for her faith, appreciated for her ministry to her son – the Son of God – and honored for her legacy of obedience and virtue.

7. Women in the Gospels

I. The Samaritan Woman

John 4:3-42

II. Martha & Mary

Luke 10:38-42

John 11:1-45; 12:1-8

III. Mary Magdalene

Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1-11

Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1-11

Luke 8:2,3; 24:1-12

John 19:25; 20:1-18

The four women selected for this part of our study, collectively represent most of the women Jesus knew and met during His earthly ministry (See HANDOUT #13 “The Women Jesus Knew and Met”). Each woman has a unique role in the time and place where Jesus walked, and each woman was changed forever by their encounters with the Son of God. And in the end, each woman took their place in ministry and devotion to their Master.

I. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

READ John 4:3-42. Pay close attention to verses 9 and 27. What was the reaction of the Samaritan woman when Jesus spoke to her? How did the disciples react when they saw Jesus talking to this woman? _____

“This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person even the common faults of the community: no rule but has some exceptions.”
Matthew Henry

The woman does not say why she is surprised that Jesus would speak to her. John adds parenthetically, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” So if we are to fully understand why this woman and Jesus' disciples were shocked when He spoke to her, we must dig into the historical and religious backgrounds of the Jews and the Samaritans, and at the same time, we must examine the Jewish culture's attitudes toward women.

The Samaritans – 2 Kings 17

The district of Samaria lay between Judea on the south and Galilee on the north. This land on the west side of the Jordan had once been part of the northern Hebrew kingdom of Israel. When Israel fell in 722 B.C., the Assyrians carried out their policy of conquest and scattered most of the Jewish population throughout their other conquered territories and resettled the area with conquered people from other lands. The new settlers brought their own tribal gods with them and set up the worship of these idols in the land, but soon they adopted who they recognized as the “god of the land”, Yahweh. Over time, the few remaining Hebrews in Samaria intermarried with the foreigners settled there by Assyrian conquerors, and joined them in their idol worship.

The Samaritans of Jesus' day were the descendants of these peoples who claimed allegiance to Yahweh, but they also claimed allegiance to the gods of their ancestors. The Jews, who maintained the purity of their race and religion while in exile in Babylon, rejected the Samaritans. After they returned and rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews would not allow the Samaritans to worship there. The Samaritans

“Too many people feel that they ought to do something to show their respect for God. They attend to the outward forms of worship, lest they should lose status; but in their hearts they enthrone worldly and worthless ideals.”
F. B. Meyer

established their center for worship at Mount Gerizim near the town of Sychar.

Almost from the beginning, a deep hostility developed between these neighboring peoples, and by the first century a deep prejudice against the Samaritans was felt by the religious leaders of the Jews. Many Jews on their way to or from Jerusalem, would cross over the Jordan River to the east, and go around Samaria. Jews believed that contact with the Samaritans would defile them and make them ritually unclean; they would not eat with the Samaritans, and would refuse to drink from the same cups the Samaritans used. So it is natural that His disciples would be shocked to see Jesus, sitting with and talking to a Samaritan, while drinking water from her cup.

The woman's surprise that Jesus would speak to her went beyond the fact that she was a Samaritan. She would have been surprised that Jesus, a Jewish male, would talk to her, a Samaritan woman. From His speech and from His clothing, the woman at the well would have immediately identified Jesus as a Jewish rabbi. The rabbis of Jesus' day paid little attention to women. Jewish men were instructed to pray three benedictions each day, including one in which he thanked God that he was not made a woman. The Pharisees believed, "better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace." Jewish rabbis taught that women were responsible for most – if not all – sin, especially for sexual temptation. Therefore, the Law reflected the belief that women were inferior in all matters and should be submissive. But it was not just the Jews who thought women were inferior; most Middle Eastern cultures of the first century limited women to the domestic roles of wife and mother. No doubt, this woman would have been kept on the periphery of religious life in the male-dominated Samaritan religion as well.

"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face.

And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem."

Luke 9:51-53

So as Jesus sat by Jacob's well that day, and watched this woman walk up the path that led to Him, He understood there were three obstacles or prejudices He would have to overcome if He was going to reach this woman:

1. Religious obstacle – she was an idol worshiper, and did not worship God in spirit and truth.
2. Racial prejudice – the Samaritans were a mixed race of part Jew and part Gentile. There were generations of racial antagonism between the Jews and Samaritans.
3. Social stigma – because the Samaritan was a woman, she would have considered herself socially inferior to any man who talked to her.

Read John 4:3-42 once more. How did Jesus deal with these three barriers? _____

Jesus never allowed the artificial, man-made barriers of religious differences, racial prejudices, or social stigmas stand in the way of seeking and saving the lost. Jesus was a Man on a mission with His Father; and that mission was to save every lost sheep that would listen to the voice of their Good Shepherd calling them home.

Read John 4:16-29 again. What were the three obstacles that the Samaritan woman had to overcome to receive the “living water” Jesus offered her?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” Acts 8:5-8

Jesus was able to overcome the man-made obstacles that would have prevented Him from reaching out to this Samaritan woman simply by ignoring them, and keeping His focus upon His mission to seek and save the lost. However, the woman had three barriers that were preventing her from receiving the “living water” Jesus was offering:

- First, the woman had a **personal moral problem**. When Jesus told her, “...woman go call your husband” she had to acknowledge her personal sin. Later, her response, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!” Indicated she openly and freely admitted her sins.
- She had a **deep spiritual confusion** that was the result of her idolatry. The woman's sin was a reflection of the sin of the Samaritan people as a whole. SEE HANDOUT # 17 “Samaritan Idol Worship” The Samaritans included the worship of Yahweh along with their idol worship, but it was only a partial truth. They used a version of the five books of Moses that was edited to suit their other religious practices, and rejected the rest of the Jewish Scriptures. They made sin offerings at Passover, but not at the temple in Jerusalem. In everything they did, the Samaritans antagonized the Jews and showed they were unwilling to submit to God and worship Him in Spirit and truth. The Samaritan woman had to overcome her spiritual confusion and turn to the truth Jesus was showing her.
- She had to overcome **her lack of faith**. Obviously, this woman knew God existed because she acknowledged that both on “this mountain” and in Jerusalem, God was worshiped. She would have heard the stories from the Bible; she knew about Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. She was waiting for the Messiah (Savior) of

“The woman at the well discovered something in accepting Christ that she had long yearned for. Jesus gave her the unconditional acceptance and love that we all ache for. What the woman may have sought in promiscuous sex she found through faith in Jesus. And so can we today.”
Sue & Larry Richards

her people to come, and believed, “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Before she could receive the “living water” Jesus offered her, she had to believe Jesus when He said to her, “I who speak to you am He” and receive Him as her Savior.

The legacy learned from Jesus' encounter with this Samaritan woman are for Christians and non-Christians alike. Some Christians would rather argue the finer points of theology or doctrine rather than present the simple offer of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. But it is not our church programs, creeds or doctrines that will save people and quench their spiritual thirst. Jesus was able to look past all those things that divide people and create barriers to reaching them with the Gospel. But those who are searching for the source of true spiritual “living water” must be willing to let go of those things that keep them from receiving it.

Once the woman believed and received the truth of Christ's salvation, the “living water” of the Holy Spirit began to spring up in her and overflowed. Her joy could not be contained, and she immediately went to the village and proclaimed the “good news” of her great discovery. This woman, who came to the well ashamed and isolated from her village because of her sins, returned to her neighbors a changed person. So it was because of her testimony about Jesus and the new life evident in her that her neighbors went out to see for themselves who was this man that made this woman who was dead in her trespasses and sins overflowing with life and hope. The story ends with the whole village declaring to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

*“In her enthusiasm she left her water pot behind as a pledge of her return, not only for natural water, but also for a further spiritual draught from the living well she had found in Christ... He had awakened her to a new and better life and such was the effect of her earnest witness that many of those Samaritans went out and came to Jesus at the well.”
Herbert Lockyer*

II. MARTHA & MARY

Read Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-45; and John 12:1-8. Write what are Martha's and Mary's personalities. Who are you most like and why? _____

We are first introduced to Martha and Mary in Luke's Gospel, but Luke's portrait of the two sisters is incomplete without John's account. **Read Luke 10:38-42 again. What does Luke tell us about the relationship between Jesus and Martha and Mary?** _____

Luke tells us very little about the relationship between Jesus, Martha and Mary. Luke's narrative makes it seem as though Jesus and His disciples just happened to be visiting this certain, unnamed village, and were welcomed by Martha into her house. While Martha is busy preparing and serving a house full of guests, her sister sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His teachings. Martha's complaint is first about Jesus, "Lord, do you not care...?" and second about her sister, "she has left me to serve alone." Then she makes a demand that Jesus

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."
John 20:30-31

command Mary to get up and help her. Jesus gently rebukes Martha for her importunity, and the story abruptly ends; Luke never mentions Martha and Mary again.

Luke's account of this single encounter of Jesus with Martha and Mary brings home the point that the Gospels were not written by biographers. The purposes of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not to give comprehensive, daily journals of Jesus' every word and action. The Gospels were written by missionaries and therefore, the authors wanted to drive home specific points about Jesus' earthly ministry that communicated to their readers the main themes that were the purpose for writing their Gospels in the first place: to tell how and why they came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord, and convince those who read them of the same truth.

Understanding Luke's purpose for writing his Gospel, what is the point he wanted to make by telling this particular story in the way he told it? _____

This story of Martha and Mary is a lesson in priorities from the Master Rabbi, Jesus. Mary was the sister who sat at Jesus' feet. She knew intuitively that she would not always have Jesus so near to her. Mary was seeking intimacy with God in the presence of Jesus. Mary saw Jesus as the source of Living Water to quench her thirst, and while Jesus was near, she was determined to drink in everything Jesus taught. Martha wanted to serve the Lord by providing for His physical needs. Jesus needed

“Then Jesus said to them, “I shall be with you a little while longer, and *then* I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come.”
John 7:33-34

food and rest for his body, and Martha was doing all she could to make her Master feel as comfortable as possible in her home. But, like so many servants of God, she got carried away in the responsibilities and the activity of serving. As Martha began to feel overwhelmed and alone in her serving, she lashed out. Jesus' gentle and loving rebuke of Martha reminded her of what was most important at that moment. Notice that Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her service, but only for allowing herself to become "worried and troubled about many things." Martha had become so distracted by her serving, that she was unable to enjoy the presence of the One she wanted to serve. In John 12:2 we find Martha once again serving the Lord His supper. But this time her attitude had changed; she was no longer distracted and vexed by her serving, but was fulfilled by serving in the presence of the Son of God.

Read John 11:1-45 again. What information does John add to Luke about Martha and Mary? _____

What does this passage tell us about Martha, Mary and Lazarus' relationship with Jesus? (Note verses 2, 3, 5, 11, 33-36, & 38) _____

To fully understand John's story of the resurrection of Lazarus from the tomb, it is important for us to know much more about the relationships between Jesus, Lazarus and the sisters – Martha and Mary – than Luke told us in that one

*"The happy combination is that of Martha and Mary, the practical and the spiritual making possible the glory of the commonplace. The church requires both the Marys and the Marthas for both are necessary to complete the Christian character."
Herbert Lockyer*

particular incident he described. Martha and Mary were two different persons, each with their own personalities, likes and dislikes. Still they, along with their brother, Lazarus, were members of the same family and lived together, sharing the responsibilities of maintaining a household.

None of the Gospel writers tell us when and how the relationship between Jesus and this family developed, but it is clear from John's story that Jesus loved them and they loved Jesus. When the sisters sent a message to Jesus, they told Him, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." John added, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." And when His disciples questioned Jesus over His delay in going to Lazarus, He called him, "Our friend, Lazarus..."

Understanding the great love and friendship shared between Jesus and this family, adds to the tension and drama of the story when Jesus delays going to his sick friend two more days, and then announces to His puzzled disciples that His dear friend has died. We also understand the bewilderment of both sisters when each sees Jesus for the first time since Lazarus had died; Martha and Mary, each in turn, says to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus' groaning in pain and weeping at the entrance of His dear Lazarus' tomb is understood because John has told us how much this family meant to the Lord.

If Luke's story was all we had, we might conclude that Mary believed in Jesus, while Martha was too busy with her household chores to hear the Lord's teachings. But from John's story of the raising of Lazarus, we discover that Martha was a woman who had great faith in Jesus – a faith that was equal to Mary's in every way. After the death of her brother, Martha spoke to Jesus first. And even though she could not understand why her brother had to die, she expressed her unflinching faith in Jesus, saying, "even now I know whatever You ask of God, God will give to You." She could not have known what God

*"We must never
forget that no
offering lavished on
Jesus is wasted... no
sacrifice made for
Jesus is forgotten."*

John R. Stott

was about to do, but still when asked, “Do you believe?” she said, “Yes, Lord, I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God.” It took great faith for her to profess her unshaken faith in Jesus while still in mourning over the death of one so dear to her.

Martha and Mary accompanied Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus. When Jesus commanded that the tombstone be rolled away, exposing the body, Martha – always the practical one, and wanting to protect Jesus from the unpleasantness of the grave – reminded the Lord that there would be bad smell coming from the opened tomb. But Mary only watched, equally unsure of what was about to happen. Once their brother was resurrected from his grave, the sisters saw the glory of God and believed Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life just as He said.

Review the story of Martha and Mary. What are the lessons you have learned from them? _____

Martha and Mary are not unlike many of the women Jesus encountered during His public ministry. In fact, the Jews of Jesus’ day were not unlike the many of the people in the world today. They went about their daily routines – earning a living and caring for their homes and families – much the same as modern women. At the same time, these women were

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”
John 11:25-26

women of faith and wanted to follow the traditions and religious beliefs that shaped their culture. From their experiences with Jesus we learn some valuable lessons about the need to take some time out of the business of our daily routines and spend it sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning from Him. Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her “secular service”, but for allowing her service to take priority over the joy of spending time in the presence of Her Master. Martha’s service has its rightful place in the life of the believer, but we must be aware that both serving and learning are duties. In whatever we do, we honor God by doing it with joy and peace in our heart. Mary’s example shows us to lavish our best to God who sent His only Son “who broke the alabaster box of His own body that heavenly forgiveness and fragrance might be ours.”

The death of their dearly loved brother taught Martha and Mary to trust the Lord even in their deepest sorrows. We can learn from the sisters to cast every care, burden, and grief upon Him, knowing that He is able to carry them for us. In times when His help appears to be delayed, we can learn, like Martha and Mary learned before the tomb of Lazarus, that Jesus never tarries, but is always on time. And when death finally overtakes us in this life, Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, will grant us eternal life at the final resurrection.

III. MARY MAGDALENE

Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1

Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1-19

Luke 8:2; 24:10

John 19:25; 20:1-18

Except for Mary, the Mother of Jesus, no other woman in the Gospels is mentioned more times than Mary Magdalene.

“It seems improbable that one woman’s present to Jesus should be recounted in the preaching of the gospel all over the world and all down the centuries; but that is how it has turned out.”

John R. Stott (on Matthew 26:13)

Since “Mary” was such a common name at the time, “Magdalene,” her place of origin is added to her name to identify which “Mary” is being spoken of. As we examine the Scriptures relating to Mary Magdalene, we will discover that she was one of the faithful few who followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. We are not told how old she was, and there is no record of her family history or her marital status. The fact that she was able to follow Jesus wherever He went suggests that she had no family obligations and had some means of support. She was one of the few who remained with Him at the end. And was the first to see Him after His resurrection.

READ Luke 8:1-3. What do these verses tell us about Mary Magdala and her relationship to Jesus? _____

Some ancient Jewish writings describe Magdala as an immoral and profligate city; they claim that because of the harlotry practiced there it was eventually destroyed. Luke introduces Mary Magdalene immediately after his story of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:36-50), leading some people to conclude that Mary was a prostitute. However, there is not one piece of credible evidence to confirm such a conclusion about Mary’s character. Luke does not tell us when or where Mary met Jesus, but he does tell us that Mary was a deeply disturbed woman and afflicted with seven demons before she met Him. After meeting Jesus, Mary

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order.

Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

Matthew 12:43-45

was healed and set free from all that tormented her. Mary is just one of the women that Luke says Jesus “healed of evil spirits and infirmities.” She and “many others” joined the band of disciples who followed Jesus and helped provide for them all they needed along the way.

READ Matthew 27:55-56; 27:58-61; Mark 15:40-41; 15:47; and John 19:25. What do these verses tell you about Mary’s devotion and dedication to Jesus Christ? _____

Once she is set free and delivered by Jesus, Mary shows her gratitude by becoming one of His most devoted followers. As Jesus said, “The one who is forgiven much loves much” (Luke 7:47). Mary, like all the other disciples, left her home and followed Jesus as he “went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1). Mary was able to participate in the advancement of the kingdom of God by supporting Jesus on His mission. The practical needs of life on the road had to be met; Mary and these women would have fulfilled that purpose, providing food and other necessities. But it may well be that Mary and the other women were also among the seventy messengers Jesus sent out in Luke 10. Although there is no way to prove that women were among the seventy that were sent out, Luke never mentioned the genders of these messengers. But either way, Mary helped Jesus as she willingly gave of her means and her time to help meet the needs of Jesus and the Twelve.

“To think of women as disciples in training for leadership violated Jewish custom, but Jesus broke the mold in His relationships with women. Women most certainly were among His disciples.”

*Sue and Larry
Richards*

The Gospels tell us that Mary was one of the few who stayed with Jesus until the bitter end. She followed Him as he carried His cross up the Hill; stayed by His mother's side at the foot of the cross, and watched Him give His life as a ransom for many. She watched as His body was taken down from the cross and followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb. On the third day, while it was still dark, Mary was with the women who went to His tomb to complete the final preparations for His body.

READ Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:1-18. On a separate piece of paper, use these verses to write in your own words all that happened that morning. Pay close attention to Mary Magdalene's role. Then answer below, what was special about Mary's experiences that morning? _____

Mary Magdalene was part of a small group of women who went to the tomb of Jesus that Resurrection morning. The mourning for their crucified Master had just begun, but even though He had died, they continued to provide for His needs. They could not know the discovery that was waiting for them when they left the house that morning with spices in hand to properly anoint His bloodstained body.

It is significant that Mary, a woman, was given the great honor to be the very first witness to the most important

*"Mary went with her Lord into the shadows, and is thus represented as being among those who followed Jesus on His last sad journey from Galilee to Jerusalem."
Herbert Lockyer*

event in Christian history: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mary's faithfulness and unwavering devotion to the One who delivered her from forces of darkness that tormented her most of her life was rewarded by permitting her to be the first witness to the central truth of our faith: "He is alive!"

The last glimpse we have of Mary Magdalene is in John's Gospel when she goes and tells the disciples that she had seen the Lord and tells them all that He had spoken to her (John 20:18). Although the Bible is strangely silent about this pivotal person in the Gospel story after the events of that first Easter Morning, nothing can diminish the magnificent honor that was bestowed upon her. The fact that she did not seek a place of prominence or celebrity because she was chosen by God to be the first witness to the Resurrection speaks well of her humility and sincerity. We can only speculate if Mary was with the others who assembled with the apostles in the upper room for prayer and to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit's power. If she was there, then no doubt, along with the rest she received the baptism of fire in the Holy Spirit and was made an effective witness of the truth that she alone was first to see and believe.

"It's curious that if Mary Magdalene were with us today, many church pulpits would be closed to her. How wonderful that whatever hindrances to ministry may exist, no one can keep us from sharing Christ with neighbors and friends."

Sue and Larry Richards

Mary Magdalene left for us the legacies of:

- GRATITUDE. Mary showed her gratitude for how Jesus set her free from demonic torment by devoting her life to uncompromising service to her Master. Despite the pain, the doubts and the fears she must have felt those last hours leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, she did not run away. Her devotion went beyond the grave because she was there at the first opportunity to complete the final preparation of Jesus' body she thought was still in the grave.

- **REWARDS OF FAITH.** Mary's faith and devotion was rewarded. So often we serve the Lord through the heartaches, disappointments, trials and tribulations of this world. And there are times when we wonder if our faith will ever be rewarded. Mary's legacy should be an encouragement to us, for the Lord did not forget Mary and bestowed upon her a reward that no earthly crown can match.
- **HUMILITY.** Mary Magdalene, the first to touch and speak with our risen Lord, could have sought a place at the head of the table with Peter, James, John and the other disciples. Yet, from the first moment she followed Jesus from Galilee, to Jerusalem, and through His trials and eventual triumph, she demonstrated a thousand ways in which a liberated soul can serve the Lord in love and humility. Mary's gratitude and devotion moved her to serve her Master with a humble heart. "She owed much, gave much, loved much, served much."

8. Women in Acts

I. Tabitha

Acts 9:36-42

II. Lydia

Acts 16:14, 15, 40

III. Demonized Slave Girl

Acts 16:16-24

IV. Priscilla

Acts 18:2, 3, 18, 26

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” Acts 17:11-12

Since the historical setting of the Gospels was confined to the area in and around 1st century Palestine, it was therefore, dominated by the patriarchal society of the Jews. Although Jesus was raised in a typical Jewish home and lived and taught within that cultural context, we have seen the key roles that women played in His life and ministry. The Son of God had come to set people free from the spiritual oppression of the law of sin and death; at the same time, He came to lift and transform the lives of all those He touched. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John described for us how Jesus especially

gave dignity and value to the women who followed Him – something that was for the most part denied them in 1st century Jewish society.

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus did not come to directly confront the patriarchal structure of the Jewish culture, and in Acts it is equally clear that Jesus did not send His Apostles to change the contemporary views towards women of rabbinic Judaism or of the Pagan culture that dominated the world where the early missionaries were sent to preach the “good news”. However, what we do see in Acts is the continuation of Christ’s liberating presence through the transformational work of the Holy Spirit in the early church.

The roles of women in the Roman Empire were much more diverse than in the areas dominated by the Jews. Roman society was for the most part aristocratic and patriarchal – with the women dominate in the household and men dominate in the larger society. At the same time, gender relationships in the Roman world were not monolithic, but varied from place to place, according to social class and other ancient cultural issues. Wealth and prosperity in the Roman Empire brought some women a great degree of independence and personal freedom. Although rare, women could exercise influence over public affairs and hold public or cultic offices. Through marriage, aristocratic women could act as regents or co-rulers; they could build temples, found cities, engage mercenaries, or even command armies. Yet in spite of all the wealth, power, and influence some women had obtained, still most men would have agreed with the Hellenistic view of Aristotle who wrote, “*the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject*” (Politics 3.2.10).

Throughout the Roman world, marriages were for the most part arranged by the parents. In the Roman upper classes, marriages were contracted by the families for political or economic purposes. Once settled, the girls could refuse the

And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son of Alphaeus* and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son of James*. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 1:12-14

marriages arranged by their fathers only in extreme circumstances – like the moral unfitness of the groom. However, in the Roman aristocratic classes, divorce had become a socially acceptable option for women as well as men to opt out of unhappy marriages.

In many cases, freedwomen (women who had been granted or had earned their freedom from slavery) lived better lives in the Roman Empire than Greek or Jewish women; many opportunities were open for them to earn a good income. These women could take advantage of Rome's liberal property laws and buy or sell property. Many of these women had the financial means to contribute to the community and help the less fortunate around them.

Once the Gospel broke through the walls of Judaism, and began to spread rapidly throughout the Roman world, the church had to come to terms with the diverse and changing roles of men and women in different cultures and classes throughout the Roman world and beyond. The Gospel brought spiritual redemption for women everywhere and a newfound freedom in Christ that elevated them to a position of equality before the Father. In Christ women found the spiritual equality with men that they were intended to enjoy from the beginning. However, women's roles in the church would still need to be defined in relation to their societal roles to the State, family, parents, husbands, children, etc. Many of Paul's statements about women are easily misunderstood or misrepresented when taken out of the context of when, where, and to whom they were written. Although everything Paul and the other Apostles wrote to the churches about women possesses spiritual truths and godly principles reflecting divine inspiration, not everything they wrote for women was intended to have universal application.

As we study the legacies of these four women from the

"Be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears. The woman came out of a man's rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior, but from the side to be equal. Under the arm to be protected, and next to the heart to be loved."
From the Hebrew Talmud

Book of Acts, we will see how the roles of women were defined and transformed by the Holy Spirit in the church. These four very different women represent the diversity of Roman culture and demonstrate how the power of God worked in and through them to transform their lives and enriched the early church.

I. TABITHA

Read Acts 9:36-42. In your own words, describe who Tabitha was and the legacy she left behind as an example for us. _____

The name Tabitha (in Greek Dorcas) means “gazelle”. The gazelle is known as one of God’s *fair* creatures – pleasing to the eye or mind especially because of a fresh, charming, or flawless quality. We are never told if Tabitha was a physically beautiful young woman, but she lived a beautiful life in Christ – a life that was pleasing to all who came into contact with her.

She Was A Disciple: Acts 9:36

The very first thing that we learn about Tabitha is that she is a disciple. The fact that she is not singled out from the other disciples because of her gender is significant because from the beginning the term “disciples” can apply to both male and females.

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the

number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said... ” (Acts 1:14-15).

We do not know how many disciples followed Jesus during His earthly ministry, but the number was well beyond the twelve specially chosen by Him to be the first Apostles. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus sends seventy disciples to the villages ahead of Him; Acts 2 – 4 describes the thousands of souls being added to the church in Jerusalem through the Apostles’ ministry; and Acts 9:1-2 says, *“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”*

So we must conclude that many of those who followed Jesus were women, and about half of those added to the church from Pentecost onward must have been women. That being the case, then women were by no means excluded from the gift of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the church. (Note the promise of Jesus to the Samaritan woman in John 4:14: *“...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

She Was A Philanthropist: Acts 9:39

Read Matthew 25:31-46 and James 2:14-20. How did Tabitha’s life line up with the teachings of Jesus? _____

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”
James 1:27

Tabitha was mourned and missed by many in Joppa – even those men who did not directly benefit from her many charitable deeds rushed to find Peter and ask him to come and minister to all those who were suffering because the death of this one woman so “full of good works and charitable deeds.” Tabitha was a practical woman when it came to giving; she was not intellectual or sentimental about the burdens of the poor, but saw a need and did what she could to ease the burdens of the poor and needy. She could have been content just leaving a few coins in the offerings collected every week for the poor and left the hard work to others. But she went far beyond the minimum and gave of her time, treasure and talents in a hands-on demonstration of true Christian charity. And because of that, her legacy was not just a statue or plaque with her name written upon it, but she was remembered by and genuinely mourned by those “living stones” of people who testified in tears to Peter of her overwhelming generosity and the tender care she put into each of the garments she made for them with her own hands.

“Never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often in such matters the mustard-seed germinates and roots itself.”
Florence Nightingale, The founder of modern nursing.

She Was Raised From The Dead: Acts 9:40-41

Read Mark 5:35-43. Compare the story of Jesus raising the dead girl back to life with this story of Tabitha being brought back from the dead. Note the similarities and differences. _____

It is not clear from the narrative in Acts 9:36-42 what were the expectations of those who sent messengers to Peter – unlike the story in Mark 5, they were not asking him to heal a sick woman who died before he could reach her. Tabitha was already dead when they called for Peter. Of course they had heard the stories of Jesus – how He raised the dead and how the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Maybe they had hopes that Peter could and would do the same for Tabitha, but more likely, the urgent call was for Peter to come share in their grief and to help console them over their loss. Until he reached the room where Tabitha’s body lay, Peter gave no indication of what he was about to do. No doubt the incident where Jesus raised the dead girl (Mark 5:35-43) was on Peter’s mind when he put all of the mourners out of the room, and knelt down to pray. It must have taken great courage and great faith for Peter to pray, “Tabitha, arise.” Once the miracle was complete, the story of the miracle spread quickly throughout the city and many believed because of Tabitha’s resurrection.

II. LYDIA

Read Acts 16:6-13. What were the circumstances that led Paul and his companions to meet Lydia? _____

In the previous chapter (Acts 15), the leaders of the church met at Jerusalem (verses 6-29) to solve a major issue

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”
Acts 15:28-29

that was causing problems between Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ. The question before them was whether or not Gentile believers had to be circumcised and obey to the Law of Moses to be saved. The entire future of Christianity was at stake because if Gentiles had to become Jewish converts before they could receive salvation in Christ Jesus then their salvation would no longer be by grace through faith – which was what Paul and the other missionaries were preaching – but would then be first by obedience to the Law with faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, tacked on at the end.

The issue was a major crisis for the Jews as well; for the Jews had been taught all their lives that their salvation depended upon their strict adherence to the Law of God, including circumcision as their rite of inclusion into the Abrahamic covenant. If those things were no longer necessary to be acceptable to God then the entire dynamic of their faith would change. If the Gentiles were included apart from the Law, then the Jews' special relationship to God as His chosen people would lose its significance. Fortunately for the countless millions of Gentile believers who would be grafted into the faith as spiritual children of Abraham down through the centuries, the leaders of the church gathered at Jerusalem that day listened to what the Holy Spirit was speaking to them and stood upon the gospel truth that *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (John 3:16, 17)

Now that the issue of Gentile believers was solved, Paul set out from Antioch on his second missionary journey. Paul and Silas followed a land route that would lead them through the cities Paul had visited on his first missionary

“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Romans 10:1-4

journey. In the beginning, Paul wanted to check on the progress of the churches he planted on his first mission, but as they traveled the Roman road through Cilicia and Galatia, visiting towns and villages and encouraging the believers they met along the way, the Holy Spirit was leading them away from Asia and towards the port city of Troas on the Aegean Sea.



At Troas, Paul received a vision from the Holy Spirit of a man from Macedonia, urging him “come and help us” (Acts 16:9). Following the lead of the Holy Spirit, the missionaries embarked on a ship and landed in Europe for the very first time.

Read Acts 16:14, 15. What makes Lydia such a significant person for the advancement of the Gospel into that region?

“Lydia... typifies a successful business woman in a prosperous city. Ability, enthusiasm, singleness of purpose and mental acumen were hers, and she prospered greatly in an honorable and extensive calling of ‘selling purple.’ Lydia was an example of the comparatively independent position some women attained to in Asia Minor. That she became prosperous in business is seen in that she owned a spacious home, and had servants to care for her.”

Herbert Lockyer

Lydia was a key transitional figure in the spreading of the Gospel. Her place of origin was the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor where Paul traveled on his first missionary journey. Thyatira was the city where one of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation was located (2:18-29). Her name identifies her as being Gentile by birth, but she is also described as a “worshiper of God”, which means she was a Jewish convert and worshipped Jehovah. At some point in time she left her home in Thyatira and moved to Macedonia, which was a crossroads between Asia Minor and Europe. There she continued her trade of selling dyed, purple cloth, which was the most famous product of her hometown in Thyatira. Lydia’s position as an influential businesswoman made her a respected member of the community and able to help support the work of Paul and other missionaries.

Review John 4:1-42 (the Samaritan woman at the well). Contrast that very different woman with Lydia; then compare how God used each one to influence their community. _____

What do the legacies of Lydia and the Samaritan woman tell you about whom God chooses to advance His kingdom? _____

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit...

1 Thessalonians

1:5-6

Read Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9, 10; 3 John 5-8; and Galatians 6:6. In what ways did Lydia's behavior conform to the pattern of behavior expected of all Christians? _____

Lydia's story does not end with Acts 16:15. Immediately after her conversion, she offers her hospitality to Paul and his companions. Later, after Paul and Silas came out of the prison (Acts 16:40), Lydia risked her reputation and standing in the community by opening her house once more to them. Lydia freely gave from her income to help support the work of God's ministers of the Gospel that she joyfully received from them. Lydia became a leader of the first church established by Paul in Europe by making her home a hospitable place for Paul, Silas and the others who no doubt followed in their footsteps. Lydia's home became a safe place for Paul and others to meet with the brothers and encourage them in that city.

III. DEMONIZED SLAVE GIRL

Read Acts 16:16-24. Briefly describe the life of this nameless slave up until she encounters Paul. _____

There are three important points to make about the condition of this slave girl:

- First, she was a slave
- Second, she was demon possessed
- And third, her owners exploited her condition

One word best describes this woman's life: *captive*. Her physical body was enslaved by her owners. We do not know what circumstances brought her to this condition. Slavery had a long history in the ancient world and was practiced in Ancient Egypt and Greece, as well as Rome. Although the Old Testament talks about slavery, by the 1st century, slavery in Israel was almost completely eliminated.

Slaves were an important part of the Roman economy. It is estimated that around 20% of the entire population of the Roman Empire were slaves. Slaves worked everywhere – in private households, in mines and factories, and on farms. Their labor was essential to the functioning of the Empire; they worked for city governments on engineering projects such as roads, aqueducts and buildings.

Most slaves in the Roman Empire were foreigners, but Roman slavery was not based on race. Slaves in Rome often included prisoners of war, sailors captured and sold by pirates, or slaves imported from territories outside of Rome. In hard times, it was not uncommon for desperate Roman citizens to raise money by selling one or more of their children into slavery.

As cruel as her physical bondage may have been, it was compounded by the fact that this woman was also enslaved by a demon. In the same way that her physical body was legally bound to do whatever her owners commanded her to do, her soul was spiritually bound by a demon to be used for its own purposes. Her owners were completely indifferent to her condition; to them, she was just a piece of property to be used and profited from. They saw the spirit of divination in her not as a cruel torture for her to be released from, but as a means for them to make money from her fortune telling.

And [Jesus] was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*

Luke 4:16-19

After successfully planting a church in Lydia's household, Paul and his missionary team entered the nearby city of Philippi. Here in this overwhelmingly pagan city, Paul began his preaching ministry in the Greco-Roman world.

Read Acts 13:4-12. Note the resistance Paul faced from Bar-Jesus on his first missionary journey, and compare with this woman's interference. Why would the demon in Philippi support the Christian missionaries? _____

Why would Paul be annoyed by the testimony of the demon-possessed woman? _____

In Cyprus, the devil tried direct confrontation against Paul in an attempt to stop him from preaching the gospel to the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. It failed. Now in Philippi, the devil took a different tactic. He took possession of the girl's faculties and had her follow Paul around. He had her "helping" Paul by shouting out to the crowd, *"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."*

Robert Green in his book, *33 Strategies of War* (Pub. By Vinod Vasishtha, New Delhi, 2009), perfectly describes the demonic tactic being used through this unfortunate girl: "One of the best stratagems is to begin by seeming to help another person in some cause or fight, only for the purpose of furthering your own interests in the end. This is easy to find such people: they have a glaring need, a temporary weakness that you can help them to overcome. Now you have put them under a subtle obligation to you, to use as you will – to

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NIV)

dominate their affairs, to divert their energies in the direction you desire. The emotions you create with your offer of help will blind the other person to your ulterior purpose” (page 161-162).

The girls “support” was intended to co-opt the missionaries’ preaching and subject it to the demonic agenda of leading people astray through lies and half-truths. By appearing to support Paul’s preaching, the demon was in fact undercutting his message. The demon possessed woman made it difficult for Paul to preach and at the same time, drew attention away from Paul and his message. Apparently, this slave girl was already well known in the streets of Philippi. Following Paul around and shouting out the message, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation,” drew attention away from the gospel Paul was preaching and put the attention on the slave girl’s behavior.

Luke does not tell us what happened to the slave girl after Paul cast the demon out of her. Immediately after the girl is set free from the demonic spirit, her masters are enraged because their “property” has lost its value to them. Realizing she can no longer turn a profit for them, the slave owners cause a great commotion and have Paul and Silas thrown into prison. So in a twist of irony, Paul and Silas are thrown into prison for releasing the slave girl from her bondage to a demonic spirit.

The demon possessed girl left for us two very important legacies:

- First: although we do not know how the demon gained control of this particular girl’s life, we do know that there are many people who make themselves vulnerable to demonic influences by dabbling in the occult. Seeking help from spirit

WOMEN IN PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Women were full recipients at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:37-38) – this was foretold by the prophet Joel who said, “your daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28-32). It was fulfilled in the ministries of women like Philip the Evangelist’s prophesying daughters, which was reported in the account of the apostle Paul’s visit to their home (Acts 21:8-9). In 1 Corinthians 12, there is not the slightest indication that the spiritual gifts and ministries Paul spoke of were exclusively for men. There is a long history of women in the church exercising all of the spiritual gifts, including prophecy.

mediums, palmists, and other “spiritual counselors” may seem a harmless amusement to some, but it is dangerous. But as Peter warned us, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world”* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

- Second: the slave girl’s tragic situation – being callously used and abused by her masters – reminds us that all too many people in this world live in conditions that keep them trapped in all kinds of “prisons”. Poverty, social class, and caste barriers are all used to keep others in bondage to the rich and powerful elites. Drugs, alcohol, gambling, and the sex trade industry work together to capture young people and make them slaves for life – or until their usefulness to their “masters” comes to an end and they are discarded like old garbage. Christians can be thankful that we have Christ to comfort us, the Holy Spirit to empower us, and the Father to lead us to freedom from every kind of bondage: *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father””* (Romans 8:14-15).

When life is so difficult here, it is not enough for those of us who have been so richly blessed in Christ, to rise above our circumstances by focusing our thoughts on the spiritual blessings that are ours. We must always turn our thoughts to those – like the demon possessed slave girl – who are locked in prisons without hope in Christ. And beyond that, we

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’”

Matthew 25:34-36

must fulfill our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ to do all we can to set those captives free.

IV. PRISCILLA

Read Acts 18:2, 3, 18-26; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19. What do these verses tell us about Priscilla and her relationship with her husband, Aquila? _____

What do these verses tell us about Priscilla and her relationship with Paul? _____

What do these verses of Scripture tell us about Priscilla and her influence in the early church? _____

The first thing we learn about Priscilla from these verses is that she was truly a partner with her husband in all things. Aquila had found a true “help mate” in Priscilla who was “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh”. Unlike Saphira (Acts 5:1-11) and Jezebel (1 Kings 16: 29 - 21:38; 2 Kings 9),

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth *is* far above rubies.

The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:10-12

Priscilla was a strong supporter of her husband in righteousness and truth. The fact that three of the six times the husband and wife team of Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in the Scripture Priscilla is mentioned first, suggests the true, equal partnership of their relationship in:

- Marriage
- Friendships
- Work
- Ministry

The unity of their marriage covenant was strengthened by the fact that they were not unequally yoked. Priscilla and Aquila were both Jews who became believers in Jesus Christ at about the same time. We are told nothing of their conversion, so we do not know if one led the other to faith in Christ, but by the time they met Paul, both of them were Christians.

When Paul arrived in Corinth, there were very few Jews to be found anywhere in Greece. So it must have been a great joy for Paul to find Priscilla and Aquila in that city because not only were they Jews, but they were also believers in Jesus Christ. The Lord works in truly mysterious ways, and no doubt Aquila and Priscilla were discouraged after being forced to leave their home in Rome because by Emperor's Claudius' decree against all Jews (Acts 18:2). However, the Lord knew the divine appointment waiting for them in Corinth, and when the time was right, the Holy Spirit led Paul to where they were staying.

Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were a perfect match:

- They shared the same background in Judaism; so they shared a common knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures (what Christians now call the Old Testament).
- They shared a common faith in Jesus Christ; they had found their promised Messiah – and the Savior and Lord of all.

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:32-35

- They shared a common secular occupation (Acts 18:3); this must have been an added benefit for Paul who sometimes had to support himself when he was not able to find those willing to support him as a missionary (NOTE: Acts 20:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). Working together in the same occupation must have served the purpose of pulling these companions even closer together in the Lord.
- They shared a common ministry. Priscilla and Aquila started house churches (home cells) wherever they lived. In Corinth, after meeting Paul, those who heard and believed Paul's preaching in the Synagogue or in the marketplace would have found warm and welcome fellowship with other believers under this couple's roof.

Priscilla and Aquila also had the gift of discipling other believers – as evidenced by their ministry to Apollos (Acts 18:24-28) – and when the time came for Paul to depart from Corinth they traveled together as far as Ephesus, where he left them in charge of the church until his return.

The legacy of Priscilla can best be understood in Paul's letters. No matter where Paul was, he always remembered his close friends, Priscilla and Aquila. Right up to the end of his life he sent greetings to his dear friends who "risked their own necks for my life." Paul also mentioned the debt owed to this couple by "all the churches of the Gentiles" (Romans 16:3-5). In every way Priscilla and her husband exemplified what a true Christian marriage should be.

*"The women of the New Testament church lived in a new age. While the transition from the limitations placed on women in Judaism and pagan culture to the freedom promised in Christianity was slow, it was real. And that freedom – the freedom to be partners in marriage and participants in ministry – is reflected the lives of several women who lived at the dawn of the Christian era."
Sue and Larry Richards*

9. Women in the Pauline Epistles

Biblical Principles in the Epistles of Paul for a Healthy Marriage & Family

Few passages of the Scriptures create more controversy in the church today than the verses written by Paul concerning women and their roles in the home, church, and work place. The late 19th and 20th centuries saw the rise of the modern “women’s liberation” movement in the Western societies. This movement was often at war with the traditional view of women in societies that were shaped by Christian morals and values. Therefore, it was only natural that Paul’s words about women would often be at the “eye of the storm” in the so-called battle of the sexes. Unfortunately for Paul, his words were often misunderstood and taken out of context by both sides of the issue of women’s liberation. Sometimes Paul’s words are deliberately twisted and distorted by pro-women’s liberationists for dramatic effect – to generate outrage against the “male chauvinists” who in turn take Paul’s words out of context to lend “divine authority” to an extreme view of male superiority and dominance of women. Also unfortunate for Paul are the facts that he is not here to defend himself against the charges that he was a sexist/misogynist, or to clarify his words and bring correction to those who abuse his words to subjugate women.

What is truly ironic in the modern debate over the meaning of Paul’s words on women is the fact that Christianity truly was the first cross-cultural, women’s liberation movement in the world. The Apostle Paul was in the forefront of that movement and was its leading spokesman. Pauline

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.
2 Peter 3:15-16
(NIV)

Christianity did more than any other religious or philosophical movement in the ancient world to liberate women and promote their equal status with men. Paul's words (when taken in proper context and understood in relation to all of the New Testament writings on the subject of male-female relationships) will reveal the equality and dignity that women enjoyed first in their relationship with the Lord during His earthly ministry and then as members of His body, the church.

Before we begin to study specific passages from Paul's letters, it is important to understand two very important points:

1. It was never the mission of the church to change cultures. Jesus did not send His disciples out into the world to battle against the Greco-Roman worldview. Christianity was never supposed to be about destroying other cultures and replacing them with a "Christian culture". Christianity in its very core was and is about the spiritual transformation of individual souls; it is about "seeking and saving the lost" by bringing them into a right relationship with the one, true, living God over all creation. Paul understood this and in his letters addressed spiritual problems in the churches within the cultural context of the larger world around them.
2. Not every word Paul wrote about women was intended to be universal in its application. Because of Paul's anointing by the Holy Spirit to write to the churches, all of his letters contain a godly wisdom that is reasonable and logical, but at the same time is superior to godless men's reason and logic. Paul's advice for women in general, on marriage, and the family was often intended to address specific problems arising in one or more of the churches. Because Paul wrote

"From the biblical texts we know the names of female leaders more often than we know the names of male leaders of house churches. Women who exercised the grace of hospitality received into their homes both traveling missionaries and those seeking a place of Christian worship and fellowship." From article: *Women in the Early Church*, The Dictionary of the Later New Testament, Editors: Ralph P. Martin & Peter H. Davids

helper of many and of myself also. Romans 16:1-2

Phoebe seems to have been a successful businesswoman. Like Lydia (who became Paul's first convert and house church leader in Philippi), she had the means to provide assistance to Paul and many others in the church. She was recognized and commended by Paul because she proved herself to be an unselfish, generous helper or patroness of the saints. She was honored as a deaconess for her works of charity and hospitality towards those she served.

"Greet Mary, who labored much for us." Romans 16:6

Paul gave Mary special mention because she was one of the women who made an important contribution to Paul's missionary work. Women were deeply involved in the early church – not only providing hospitality to missionaries and providing for their needs, but also risking their lives and freedom by opening their homes for believers to meet.

"Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." Romans 16:7 (KJV)

In Romans 16:7 we meet another male/female ministry team like Priscilla and Aquila. Paul does not describe their relationship so we do not know if they were husband and wife or brother and sister, but what we do know is that Paul gives them equal stature. We also encounter a controversy in how this particular verse is worded from the original Greek. Some translations word this in favor of those denominations that deny women could ever have been apostles. However, many respected Bible expositors, including the *United Bible Societies Handbook Series*, which is a widely acknowledged

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:3-9

authority on the Scriptures, and is composed of a board of respected translators acknowledges:

1. That they are a male/female team, "Adronicus and Junias ... could easily have been husband and wife, or brother and sister."
2. They acknowledge that some misunderstood the sentence, "to mean 'the apostles know them well,' but **a far more acceptable interpretation** would imply that these...**were counted as apostles and were well known**, for example, '**as apostles they are well known.**'" *United Bible Societies Handbook Series, (1961-1997) for Romans 16:7*

A careful examination of Romans 16:7 will give us some clues as to why Paul was able to acknowledge Junia(s) as one of his "kinsmen" who was prominent among the apostles of the church:

1. She must have been among the first believers in Jesus Christ because she was a believer before Paul. It is therefore possible that she may have seen Jesus in person and believed in Him.
2. Her name suggests that she was a Hellenist Jew rather than a Hebrew. Again, we have no definitive proof of this, but the circumstantial evidence points to her being among the Hellenist Jews present from the founding of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1).
3. Junia(s) – along with Andronicus – was willing to sacrifice her freedom, and risk her life for the Gospel
4. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-9 Paul indicates that one of the credentials for apostleship is having seen the risen Christ. If Junia had been with Jesus from the beginning, had seen Him after His resurrection, and was there at the birth of the church it would explain

"As Jesus had warned (Mt 10:35-36; Lk 14:26), embracing the new faith did not always make for harmonious family relations, though sometimes it strengthened the bonds. Domitilla, the niece of the emperor Domitian (reigned 81-96), was exiled; her husband, also apparently a Christian, was executed (Suetonius *Dom.* 19.15.17; Dio *Cassius Hist.* 67.14). Justin Martyr (Justin *Apol II 2*) tells of a woman whose profligate husband denounced her as a Christian and secured the punishment of her instructor." From article *Women in the Early Church, Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, Editors: Ralph P. Martin & Peter Davids

why she was “of note among the apostles” of the early church.

“Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.” Romans 16:12

“Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.” Romans 16:15

In these two verses Paul sends more warm salutations to other women “who labored much in the Lord.” Although there is no solid evidence from these verses, the historical evidence and church tradition indicate that these women were among the saints of Caesar’s household that Paul mentioned in his letter to the Philippians (4:22).

Tryphena and Tryphosa were probably twin sisters (it was normal at that time for parents to name twins using the same root word). Julia (the wife or sister of Philologus?) may well have been another saint in Caesar’s household who risked her life for the gospel. Once again, there is no proof that these were the women Paul was addressing in Philippians, but these names often appear in early Christian inscriptions in cemeteries used chiefly for the servants of the emperors.

Paul greets Persis, whose name means “one who takes by storm”, but who was “beloved” by the church because of her intense labors in the Lord. We don’t know anything more about her, but if her name is any indication of her personality, she must have fearlessly seized and pressed into the kingdom of heaven. As Jesus said in Matthew 11:12, *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”* Regardless of the many hindrances and difficulties, Persis remained loyal to the saints and fought the good fight of faith.

“How striking then that Paul identifies Junia, a woman, as a prominent missionary-evangelist, who was ‘in Christ before me!’”
Sue and Larry Richards

The legacies these women leave us are of their steadfast courage and loyalty to Paul and to all the saints who were facing so many hardships and persecutions for the gospel. These women gave of their time, treasure and talents to care for Paul and the other missionaries who came across their paths. We will probably never know exactly who these women were, and what were their stories. The only glimpses into their lives that we have are Paul's words thanking them and commending them for their hard labors on behalf of the early church. In the end, these women served the Lord with gladness, not for the rewards and recognition of this world, but for the rewards that were waiting for them in the kingdom of heaven, and that is what made them important partners in Paul's ministry and worthy of Paul's commendations.

"Do what you can! If you can't feed 100 people, then feed just one."

-Mother Teresa

1 Corinthians 7

Money, sex, and power – it is over these three key issues that all marital conflicts revolve. In one way or another – on one level or another – from the time of Adam and Eve the battle between the sexes has been fought over these key issues in the home, the workplace, and in the church. The patriarchal cultures of Greece, Rome, and the Hebrews treated women for the most part as if they were their husband's property. The Hebrews did not allow women into the most sacred places in the Temple, and though women might serve priestly roles in many Pagan cultures their roles were often mysterious and sexual – even to the degree of serving as prostitutes who gave the "offerings" of their male clients to the temple treasuries.

When the Corinthians received the Gospel message from Paul they were faced with a whole new set of dynamics in worship, personal conduct, and in married relationships. Evidently when Paul left Corinth he left the church with many unanswered questions and some confusion over his teachings on marriage. 1 Corinthians 7 was Paul's answer to their tough

questions about marriage, divorce, and the boundaries of sexual relations between married couples. SEE HANDOUT #20 “THE CORINTHIANS’ QUESTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE. Paul’s answers are revealing for they show us the equality that the Lord intends for women to experience in Christian marriages.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 & 7:1-9.

Was Paul opposed to people having sex outside of marriage?

_____ **Was Paul opposed to people marrying?** _____ **Was Paul opposed to married couples having sex?** _____

Paul is often accused of being anti-marriage, or against husbands and wives enjoying sexual relations with one another because of his statement, “it is good for a man not to touch a woman.” But Paul was not making a blanket statement for all people; he wanted to correct the wrong impression that he expected everyone to be celibate. Of course Paul upheld the godly position that all sex outside of marriage is wrong. Not only in 1 Corinthians, but also in a number of his other letters Paul made it clear that the sexually immoral person has no inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Celibacy is a gift from God, but it is not for everyone. Paul understood this and made it clear that to avoid the temptation of sexual immorality, “let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (vs. 2).

Paul made it clear that he did not endorse the idea of “spiritual” marriage. Marriage is a sacred institution, and sex is an important part of the union between husband and wife. In the cultural context of the time, it was understood that the wife should be sexually available to her husband; at marriage, the man took possession of his wife and she no longer had control over her body. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”
Genesis 2:24-25

revealed God's plan for mutual submission between the husband and wife in marriage. The wife did not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. However, it does not stop there; God designed the marriage so that the man no longer has authority over his body either, but the wife does. This gave the wife equality in marriage that was unequalled in the world. In the Christian marriage, the man could not do as the other males did and have extra-marital sex or take more than one spouse any more than the wife could. The partners in a Christian marriage are truly equal. Mutual consent must be involved in the most intimate moments of the marriage, and each must respect the other. Sex should not be used as a means for the wife to control her husband or for the husband to control the wife. The foundation of mutual submission in marriage is lovingly expressed as "*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due to her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.*"

"But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion.*" 1
Corinthians 7: 7-9

"HOUSEHOLD CODES" IN PAUL'S LETTERS

Paul's specific teachings on the Christian woman's relationships within the family are expressed in several passages known as "household code" passages. Ancient kings, statesmen, and philosophers often wrote about the organization and management of a proper household in their particular culture. The authority of the father as the head of the house in pagan as well as Jewish homes was affirmed by these various codes. In his writings, Paul recognized that the patriarchal structure of the family was well-established and that the average household he addressed in his letters contained a husband, wife, and children. Slaves were a vital part of the upper class Roman homes and they provided an important labor force in the market place. Paul never directly challenged these established cultural norms, but he presented Christian household codes that certainly ran counter to the

cultural norms and challenged believers to exhibit an attitude towards one another that would eventually lead to societal change once adopted by the church as it rapidly expanded throughout the Empire.

FOR DISCUSSION: What are the “household codes” of conduct in your culture? Read Colossians 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:21-6:9; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 6:1, 2; and Titus 2:1-10. These passages are known as Paul’s household codes for Christian families. In what ways are these different from your society’s household codes? To what degree do you think the New Testament is compatible with them?

There are a number of similarities between Paul’s verses on marriage and the family and the household codes of Greece, Rome, and the Jews. The Gospel is not intended to create social unrest, and Paul was no social revolutionary. So Paul’s statements were written from the perspective that it was a man’s household and that household included slaves as well as his wife and children. What separates Paul’s household codes for Christians from all other household codes are the concepts of mutual submission and reciprocal duties for everyone involved.

The power of the Gospel is in knowing that Christ brings transformation: first for the individual and then for all other relationships – even relationships between people of different station. Knowing Christ and faithfully following His teachings will transform the relationships between husband and wife, and between parents and their children. The household codes that Paul crafted with the insight and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide him, did more than redefine the accepted relationships within Jewish and Greco-Roman households. They transformed them.

“What Paul intended to communicate was simply that Christianity, far from requiring radical or revolutionary change in the social order, offered every person the opportunity to find spiritual fulfillment – whatever that person’s station in life.” Sue and Larry Richards

THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL SUBMISSION

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”

Philippians 2:5-7

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

This concept of mutual submission is critical for Christians to understand if they are going to live like Christ in this world. Mutual submission is the very essence of all Christian relationships. Christ Himself – even though He was given all authority in heaven and on earth as God incarnate – lived a life of submission, and He called His followers to live as He lived. Even though a Christian may be in a position of authority, submitting first to Christ and then to others who depend upon their leadership, will not undermine their God-given position of authority. In fact, when submission done with reverence to God, the Christian husband or wife, father or mother will discover that those under their authority who are submitted first to Christ and then to them, will trust their leadership in the home, church or business.

It is at this very point that we discover what is the root of every family problem and every dysfunctional relationship in the home, church or business: rebellion. It is the refusal to submit first to God that causes some in leadership to abuse or misuse their power and it is the refusal to submit first to God leads the same people to resent or resist any authority others may have over their life – no matter how legitimate that authority might be. There is a fear by some who are in

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.”

John 13:3-5

positions of authority in the home, church or corporate world that others will attempt to take advantage of their willingness to be mutually submitted, but the hearts and deeds of those rebellious ones will be exposed to all. Those who are submitted first to God will trust Him knowing that in the end He will always protect the righteous leader.

Jesus Christ is the role model for all those Christians who exercise any level of authority today. The character of Jesus' leadership is that of a Servant Leader (Note: John 13). He demonstrated for His followers the very essence of a Servant Leader – which is his or her submissive attitude and desire to glorify the Father in everything they do. Paul saw this and understood that mutual submission is the way Jesus planned for the church to function. He described this mutual submission in Colossians 3:16-24 & Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9:

- Jesus was submitted to the Father
- Husbands are directed to love their wives “... just as Christ loved the church”
- Wives are to be submitted to their husbands
- Children are submitted to their parents
- Fathers are directed to be sensitive to their children, understanding and meeting their needs
- Servants are to be submitted to their masters
- Masters are to love their servants and treat them as brothers and sisters in Christ
- Elders and pastors are commissioned to serve the body
- The church is to be submitted to their God-given leaders...
- And ALL are submitted to Jesus Christ.

Being able to submit to one another – no matter what your position of authority is a distinct concept made possible only

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:5-7

through Jesus Christ. This is what makes Christian relationships unique in all the world.

Jesus Christ introduced to the world a whole new approach to family relationships. There was no concept of mutual submission in the world that the Gospel was introduced into. In fact apart from the Spirit of the living God working in and through His chosen leaders, our best efforts of obedience and submission will be tainted by selfish ambition, hidden agendas, and self-interest. But in Christ, all believers are given the command and the potential to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Jesus was the perfect demonstration of submission for us when He, the Lord of the Universe, became a servant to all men. There is no place for selfishness and insecurity in the heart of a ministry or family leader. As we carry out our God-ordained roles as leaders defined by Paul in these Household Codes (and as we at the same time, serve one another) then we will learn humility and obedience to Christ.

Ultimately, the pattern of Christian mutual submission must be rooted in the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word. God honors those whose hearts have learned how to submit first to Him and then to others. Because in the kingdom of God, “he that is the greatest of all must be the servant of all.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12 – THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

It is too often overlooked by male preachers that Paul’s statements on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 apply to both males and females. The Apostle’s words were carefully chosen to make it clear that the gifts of the Spirit are for every believer – including both men and women. On the

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.

John 13:3-5

Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the Holy Spirit fell on both the men and women believers who were there. As the story of Acts unfolds, we see women involved at every step of the missionaries' journeys. Paul made no distinction between men and women believers when he said, in 1 Corinthians 12:6-7 that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*."

Read Matthew 28:6-10; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 21:8-9; Mark 15:40-41; John 11:20-27 and compare them to Paul's statements in Romans 8:11; and Romans 12:4-8. Were women considered full participants in the ministry of Jesus and the church? Explain your answer. _____

There is no justification to insert the idea that the gifts Paul lists in this passage of 1 Corinthians are intended for the profit *of all* only when received by the men, and that the gifts for women are only for other women and for children. Paul's statements concerning women in the church are completely compatible with the events described in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. The legacy of women in Paul's letters should encourage women everywhere to be equal partners in life and vitality of the church.

PROBLEM PASSAGES

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 4:10-11

We cannot depart from this study of *Women in the Pauline Epistles* without addressing some of the so-called Problem Passages. Good and godly men and women have come down on one or the other sides of each of these passages. Some commentaries teach a gender-based hierarchy within the church with leadership positions restricted to men; others insist these passages in no way restrain women from full participation in all levels of church leadership and administration. There is no way this modest study can settle once and for all the controversies swirling around these very difficult passages of Scripture. Different denominations have fixed their doctrines and dogmas concerning the participation of women in church ministry and leadership and there is little or nothing we can do here to change their minds one way or the other.

There are a number of excellent commentaries on these passages available from strong conservative Bible exegetes (interpreters). I would recommend that the student reads at least one or two commentaries from each side of these controversial issues and then decide how they will interpret them. Since in this study we cannot go into great detail over each of these passages of Scripture what we can attempt to do is:

- Give general guidelines on how to approach these passages in relation to all we have studied so far about the legacies of women in the Bible
- Address these very sensitive issues in a way that is respectful to all
- Not attempt to force one side or the other, but allow the Scripture to speak for itself.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. What is the key issue Paul is addressing in this passage? _____

“When we consider this mass of evidence from the New Testament as a whole, we are reminded of an important hermeneutical principle: Scripture does not disagree with itself. Our interpretation of any given passage must not only be consistent with the immediate context but also with the whole Word of God. Where two or more possible interpretations of a passage dealing with women exist, we must prefer an interpretation in accord with the transformation of women’s roles as witnessed in the Gospels, in Acts, and in the incidental or ‘idle words’ about women in Paul’s epistles.”

From: “Every Woman in the Bible” by Sue and Larry Richards, c. 1999, Pub. Thomas Nelson, Inc.

The very first thing we must understand before attempting to interpret this passage (and the other “problem passage” from 1 Corinthians) is that Paul’s motivation for writing this letter was to reign in a rowdy and disorganized church (SEE HANDOUT #21 “Eight Issues In The First Letter To The Corinthians”). The Church at Corinth was largely composed of Greek Gentiles from Pagan backgrounds. They had been used to worshipping their gods in festivals and celebrations that often amounted to little more than drunken orgies. They knew little of the Jewish roots of their newfound faith in Christ and were using their freedom in Christ as license to sin – even boasting of their tolerance of a man who married his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1-8)! Once we establish that in this letter Paul is addressing the general chaos of that church, then we must ask what specific issue Paul is addressing in these verses.

All of Paul’s arguments in these verses are intended to address one specific issue in the church at Corinth: must women pray in the church with their head covered? There is no indication from the text that Paul intended for his words to the Corinthian church to have universal application. However, because Paul’s words were inspired and shaped by the Holy Spirit, there are principles contained in his argument that do speak to all Christians everywhere. Paul clearly states that any woman praying or prophesying in the Corinthian church should do so with her head covered (verse 5). However, the problem with this passage for scholars is that none of them can say with any absolute certainty what Paul meant by an “uncovered” head, or why this was so inappropriate. Theories

“In my ministry in different parts of the world, I have noticed that the basic principle of headship applies in every culture; but the means of demonstrating it differs from place to place. The important thing is the submission of the heart to the Lord and the public manifestation of obedience to God’s order.” Warren W. Wiersbe

abound about what kind of head coverings were used by women in Corinth at this time (veils – such as those worn by many women in the Middle East, some kind of shawl or scarf). The text even implies that Paul could be referring to women who wore their hair loose and uncombed, or cut short like some men (verse 15). “Unfortunately,” Dr. Lawrence O. Richards said about this issue, “we are so far removed from the first century and particularly from the practices of the early Christians that we simply have no way of knowing just what these words refer to.”

Some scholars believe that the issue of head coverings had something to do with prostitutes or immoral women. The veil, they argue is the symbol of the woman’s honor and dignity. Therefore, “a woman’s authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards.” Although, we can not know for certain if Paul was referring to women in the church appearing to be morally loose women, we can reasonably conclude that Paul is addressing what ought to be proper behavior for the female Corinthian Christians.

Paul builds his case for women to use head coverings in the Corinthian church from the Scriptures. Theologically speaking, “the head of the woman is the man.” But those who interpret this to mean that men are supposed to boss women around because they are superior to them have missed the point of Paul’s argument. Paul immediately follows the words “the head of the woman is the man” with the statement, “the head of Christ is God.” If Paul was trying to argue for the inferiority of women here, then from the context, one could also conclude that Jesus is inferior to God (which Paul would never attempt to argue). Since inferiority versus superiority was not being argued here, Paul’s use of the word “head” must imply something else. The understanding becomes clearer as Paul elaborates upon his reasons: the creation of the man and the woman imply a certain

*"One reason we are so harried and hurried is that we make yesterday and tomorrow our business, when all that legitimately concerns us is today. If we really have too much to do, there are some items on the agenda, which God did not put there. Let us submit the list to Him and ask Him to indicate which items we must delete. There is always time to do the will of God. If we are too busy to do that, we are too busy."
Elisabeth Elliott*

order, not a hierarchy. Both male and female were created in the image of God and both bear the same “image and likeness”, reflecting the glory of God. But there is a God-given distinction between men and women that is proper for both to maintain. So Paul argued that the Corinthian women should not dress and behave in ways that destroy that distinction. It is one thing for a woman to express her equality with men in the church, but it is quite another for a woman to want to blur the distinctions between male and female by the way they look and act.

“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God” (v. 16). Paul sums up his argument by addressing those who were rebelling against the conventions of Greek society, and using the church as a platform to push against the customary rule of decency for women in public gatherings. However, he does not silence the contentious members of the church by mere apostolic authority, but directed by the Holy Spirit’s wisdom, he takes the time to let those women in the Corinthian church know that they would appear to the world and the church as anti-social rebels in their temperament if they continued to insist upon breaking with a custom to which all the other churches of Christ were at that time were respecting upon the ground of natural decency.

There is a time, place, and proper manner for breaking the mold of certain social conventions that are damaging and destructive to certain groups of people. Christians have most certainly been in the forefront of social change in the world, championing the rights of women, orphans, widows, children, the sick, and all kinds of downtrodden minorities. However, Paul’s letters reveal that in no way is Christianity intended to be a social reform movement; it is a spiritual movement for the transformation of individual souls. Responding to the needs of

"Gentleness is part of being feminine - part of being a woman, and God made us distinctly different from men on purpose!"
Melanie Chitwood

others and fighting for social justice are the natural by-products of a life given to Christ, but they are not the intended to be *the* reason for becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Paul's comments on this issue of Christian women's freedom of expression were intended to keep the Corinthian church focused upon Jesus Christ and the spiritual transformation He brings. It is possible for Christians to become so distracted and sidetracked by non-essential social issues that they forget the eternal, invisible, kingdom of heaven for the sake of which we have been saved. (Note the lesson of Martha and Mary.)

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, paying close attention to verses 34 & 35. What is the central theme of this passage? (Note verse 33). _____

Read 1 Timothy 2:8-15, paying close attention to verses 11-15. Compare verses 11-15 with 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 and describe how they relate to one another. _____

If anyone wants to set off fireworks in the pews of their local church, all they have to do is read aloud these passages of Scripture and declare Paul's words as proof that women must sit down and be quiet in the church and be subordinate to their husbands at home. But all we have learned so far about Jesus and women in the Gospels, the women in Acts, and Paul's overall attitude towards women run contrary to that interpretation of these problematic passages from Paul's

The biggest disease today is not leprosy or cancer or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody. The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity, the terrible indifference towards one's neighbor who lives at the roadside, the victim of exploitation, corruption, poverty, and disease.

-Mother Teresa

letters. If that was not what Paul was saying, then what was it that Paul meant in these passages?

In order to unravel these passages, we must follow the scientific rules of hermeneutics and interpret them within the proper context. If we do not, then at first glance it appears that Paul is contradicting himself between chapters 11 and 14 of 1 Corinthians. In chapter 11 Paul clearly states that women are praying and prophesying in the church. But in chapter 14, he appears to be telling them to sit down and shut up. Is Paul confused here? Or has he suddenly changed his mind in the middle of his letter? A simple, surface approach to interpreting these difficult passages will lead to confusion – but since the Holy Spirit is not the author of confusion, we must press into Paul’s statements and draw from the depths of his words to understand his meaning.

Remember we learned from the start of this study of the “problem passages” of Paul that the very first thing we must understand before attempting to interpret these passages is that Paul’s motivation for writing was to reign in a rowdy and disorganized church (SEE HANDOUT #21 “Eight Issues In The First Letter To The Corinthians”). That has not changed in chapter 14; Paul is addressing several other problems that are disrupting the church services:

- Verses 27-28 address the improper use of tongues. Paul’s solution is those who speak in tongues must keep silent unless there is an interpreter present.
- Verses 29-33 address the problem of different prophets interrupting each other in services. Paul’s answer is they should take turns and be silent when others are speaking.

In all of Paul’s answers to the Corinthian’s problems there is one underlying theme: *“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints”* (verse 33).

"The purpose of Christianity is not to avoid difficulty, but to produce a character adequate to meet it when it comes. It does not make life easy; rather it tries to make us great enough for life."

James L.

Christensen

In verses 34 & 35, Paul is once more addressing a problem that is causing confusion and disruption in the church: talkative women. The Greek word used here is a little more precise than the English. The root word is λέγω (Transliteration: legō) and implies “an extended or random harangue” (Strong’s *Talking Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*). The problem was there were certain women in the church at Corinth who were constantly and repeatedly speaking out in church meetings and disrupting the services with their questions. Paul was instructing these women to keep silent and ask their questions at home so that the church will be edified in their services.

It is a major error in Bible interpretation to take Paul’s instructions addressing a specific problem in a specific church and then make universal application of those words. Paul never intended for his words of correction for out of order women in Corinth to be applied to all women everywhere at all times. Women are to be “submissive” as Paul said in verse 34, but they are to be no more or less submissive than the others mentioned in his letter (we have already discussed the concept of mutual submission in Paul’s letters). Paul’s major concern for the church is that “*all things be done decently and in order*” (verse 40); his words make it clear that anyone – man or woman – who disrupts a church service should be strongly corrected.

“And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in the church” (verse 35). 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are similar passages and express a consistent thought that is often interpreted to mean that all women, everywhere, and at all times are not supposed to teach or speak a word in church. Those who wish to claim divine authority for maintaining a male hierarchy in the church often cite these verses. However, once again these “problem

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:26-29

passages” in Paul’s letters will be totally misunderstood if isolated from the rest of Paul’s letters and the experiences of women described in the rest of the New Testament. When studying the women of the New Testament church, we must never underestimate the important roles that godly women played in the ministry of the church. We already examined the women Paul greeted in Romans 16 – Phoebe in particular, who was a deaconess in a local church. The early history of the church is filled with stories of believing women that won their husbands to Christ and then opened their homes for Christian ministry. In Acts 18 we studied the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla who were equal partners in ministry alongside of Paul. The Gospel message was having such a profound impact on these women because it affirmed their value before God and encouraged their full, equal participation in the body of Christ. Paul’s writings were consistent with that message.

Paul’s instructions to the women in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 were a part of the broader disorderliness of that church in relation to prophetic utterances. The women he addressed were being disruptive and needed correction; the fact that Paul instructed them to ask their own husbands at home indicated that Paul respected the divine institution of marriage and the special relationship between the husband and wife. The implication of Paul’s words in the verses immediately following verse 35 is that the church leadership should not take the God-ordained place of the husband of a believing wife. Pastors, deacons, elders, etc. do not have a greater authority over the wife than does her own husband (and Paul’s instructions for husbands and wives in chapter seven is consistent for both husbands and wives).

For a clearer understanding of Paul’s thought in 1 Timothy 2:12 we must once again turn to the original Greek

"We women must realize how visual men are, and because of that we should wear modest clothes. Not because we don't have the right to wear what we want, but for the benefit of the spiritual life of our brothers in Christ."

*Heather Arnel
Paulsen*

*Emotional Purity: An
Affair of the Heart*

language. The word translated into English as “silence” is from the Greek ἡσυχίος, *hēsychios*, which indicates “*tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others*” (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words). Therefore, Paul means for women to listen and learn in a calm and peaceful manner within, which is compatible the “propriety and moderation” of their outward adornment.

In Paul's letters, submission is never a one-way street, with the wife doing all the submitting; he is always sensitive to the godly order of male/female relationships: “*For Adam was formed first, then Eve...*” which explains 1 Timothy 2:12. Women in the church were experiencing a freedom and equality in Christ that they did not know before. However, Paul was cautioning them not to use that equality to turn male/female relationships upside-down and start “lording over” the men in the church.

“Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” 1 Timothy 12:15 is another difficult passage to understand. Did Paul mean that giving birth to children saves women? Not hardly. That would be totally contrary to everything Paul wrote about salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. But when read in context of the preceding verses about Adam and Eve, Paul's statement about women and childbearing must be understood as theological argument consistent with all of his other statements concerning the proper order of male/female relationships with the man as the “head” (not her superior or Lord and Master) who loves his wife as Christ loves the church and the woman as his essential helpmate, giving comfort and support to one God gave her to be her husband and father of her children.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Ephesians 5:25-28

The women in Paul's letters are active, equal participants with men in the ministries in the church. They leave a legacy for all women to seek and discover their true value in the home, church, and society. Paul's letters never supported the idea that men are supposed to be the domineering, authoritarian, autocrats running everything, while the women are supposed to sit down and shut up in the back of the church. The women in Paul's letters were strong, competent, gifted and every way equal partners in ministry with their husbands. However, Paul strongly rebuked those women who wanted to use their newfound freedom in Christ as a license to be domineering, disruptive, or exercise ungodly authority over the men of the church. Paul was clear that from the beginning the Scripture taught that women must be submissive to their husbands, but he also made it clear that submission is never all one way. When the wife is submitted to her husband; the husband is submitted to his wife; and both are submitted to the Lord there will be good order in the church, family, and ultimately all of human society will improve.

"The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian."
A. W. Towzer

10. The Bride of Christ

Living a Life of Beauty and Holiness

Read Revelation 19:7-8, 21:9; and 22:17. Who does John the Revelator identify as the “bride”, and when will the marriage take place? _____

The Scriptures in Revelation describing the marriage of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God with His bride are one of the many mysteries that remain to be fully unraveled at the end of the age. A betrothed woman only becomes a wife on the completion of her marriage to the man to whom she is engaged. In this age – the age of Grace – the church is engaged and waiting for the arrival of the Bridegroom so she may become the Bride. A woman is truly a spotless Bride only one day of her life; once that moment is passed she becomes a wife and enters into the fullness of her life with her husband (Revelation 22:17). At the marriage of the Lamb, the church (the Bride) becomes the wedded wife of Christ (Ephesians 5:22, 23; 2 Corinthians 11:2). However, the church still has to be made ready for this future occasion.

The longing of every heart today is to truly love and to be loved. It is the fallen human condition that leaves this longing unfulfilled. The disciples on the road to Emmaus, when they realized they had been in the presence of the risen Christ, declared to one another, "Were not our hearts burning

"Love is beautiful, but it is also terrible – terrible in its determination to allow nothing blemished or unworthy to remain in the beloved."

Hannah Hurnard

within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32 NIV). That same longing was in the heart of Mary Magdalene on the morning of the Resurrection. When she realized she was talking with her beloved Savior, she held on to Him so tightly, and did not want to let Him go until Jesus gently said to her, *"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "* (John 20:17 NKJV). Finally, it was that same passion for the heavenly Christ that drove John to his knees in worship upon seeing this vision of the Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:10).

Read Zechariah 3:4-5; Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 1 John 1:7; 3:9-11; 4:15, 16; and Revelation 6:9-10. What do these verses tell us about the readiness of the bride and the wedding garment in Revelation 19:7-10? _____

Jesus knew on the day of His Resurrection that the time for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb was not right – the earthly part of the union, the Bride, was not ready. The church, the body of Christ is not without spot or blemish and there is little she can do but watch and wait in faith, knowing that the Judgment Seat of Christ will purge out all of her impurities, and bring about all necessary readiness (Matthew 25:1-13).

In Revelation 19 we have a description of the bride. Now ready, she appears in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of Christ – both imputed (given as the free

Turn your eyes upon
Jesus;

Look full in His
wonderful face. And
the things of earth
will grow strangely
dim,

In the light of His
glory and grace.

Through death into
life everlasting He
passed, and we follow
Him there;

o'er us sin no more
hath dominion – for
more than conquerors
we are!

Helen Limmel

gift of grace) for justification, and imparted (the fruit of a life lived in righteous obedience to Christ) for sanctification. The image of the bride dressed in her wedding garment of purity and chastity takes us back to another description of this feast in one of Jesus' parables (Matthew 22:1-14). When the king came to see the guests, he saw one there who did not have on a proper wedding garment and said to him, "*how did you come in here without a wedding garment?*" But he was speechless and ended up being cast out of the feast into the outer darkness.

The wedding garment represents the white robe of atonement, adoption, and freedom from sin; it is the white robe of purity and universal holiness. The Bride washed her robes and made them white not by any means of her own works, but by the blood of the Lamb; her fine garments and her precious nuptial ornaments can not be purchased by any price of her own, but she received them the only way possible: as the gift from her blessed Lord.

All that we have; all that we are; anything that is of value or that is noteworthy about us comes from our Father in heaven. God provides the garment for the Bride, but she must put it on and cover her nakedness. The pure, white linen means that there is no mixture of human effort or merit in the process of our redemption. White symbolizes holiness; the Bride's garment is purity – without spot or stain from this world of sin. Woven into its fabric are "*the righteous acts of the saints*", which takes us back to the chapters in Hebrews that speak of the heavenly "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds the church. It echoes the words in Revelation 6:9-10 of those saints who were slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. "*How long,*" *they cried out, "O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

Behold, *the* days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this *is* His name by which He will be called:

THE LORD OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS.
Jeremiah 23:5-6

The image of the Lord providing the white robe of righteousness also takes us back to Zechariah 3:4-5: *"And to him He said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.' And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by."* The "The Lord our 'Righteousness:" provides for each believer a garment of unfathomable worth, washed and purified in the blood of the Lamb. Putting on that garment means that every saint must abide in righteousness (1 John 1:7; 3:9-11; 4:15, 16), and not simply think he justified because he has accepted the invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The saints are those who do not merely *possess* the righteousness of Christ, but they are those who *put on* the righteousness of Christ by living it out in their daily life.

The legacy of the Bride of Christ for the church is the image of whom we are and what we must become to make ready our self for the time when the Bridegroom returns for His Bride. It is a legacy of a woman who lives a life of purity and holy devotion to the Lord. She is the perfect, divine, eternal fulfillment of the woman of Virtue that we studied in the first lesson of The Legacy of Women in the Bible. We see glimpses of her in every godly woman since Eve; and we see the shattered, fallen, reverse image of her in women like Jezebel.

The legacies of all the women in the Bible should strengthen, encourage, uplift, and inspire not only women, but also each and every one of us to walk by faith and not by sight in this world. They inspire us to worship God in spirit and in truth. To love Him with a whole heart because of what He has done on our behalf, and making the ultimate sacrifice to love us and lay down His life so that we might walk in the light and life of freedom from sin and death.

END

"I long to worship
Jesus with the
heart of a child,
in a state of pure
and true
adoration. Yet so
many things of
the world cloud
my thoughts
and pull on my
heart until it's
no longer just a
girl in the arms
of the Father"
Darlene Schacht
"The Mom
Complex"

HANDOUT MATERIALS

THE LEGACY OF WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

LESSON ONE

Handout #1

“David’s Family Troubles”

Even in the best of circumstances, family troubles can plague the best of families. David’s decision to take many wives compounded his grief. As a result of his sin with Bathsheba and the cover-up murder of her husband, God pronounced that conflict and murder would be a constant threat to his family. Several members of David’s family would rebel against their father, and one son would sleep with his concubines in the sight of all Israel. All this happened according to the word of the Lord delivered through the prophet Nathan. Never forget that the consequences of sin affect not only those who engage in that sin, but also anyone close to them. (See chart next page)

<u>WIFE</u>	<u>CHILDREN</u>	<u>WHAT HAPPENED</u>
Michal (Saul's daughter)	Was childless	David gave her five nephews to the Gibeonites to be killed because of Saul's sins
Ahinoam (from Jezreel)	Amnon, David's firstborn	He raped Tamar, his half sister, and was later murdered by Absalom in revenge
Maacah (daughter of King Talmi of Geshur)	Absalom, third son Tamar, the only daughter mentioned by name	Absalom killed Amnon for raping Tamar and then fled to Geshur. Later he returned, and rebelled against David, driving him out of Jerusalem. He slept with 10 of his father's Concubines. Was killed in battle by David's soldiers.
Haggith	Adonijah, fourth son	He set himself up as king before David's death. His plot was exposed, and David spared his life, but his half brother, Solomon, later had him executed.
Bathsheba	Unnamed son	Died at birth in fulfillment of God's punishment for David and Bathsheba's adultery.
Bathsheba	Solomon	Became king of Israel after his father, David. Solomon's idolatry with many wives caused his downfall and the division of David's kingdom.

LESSON ONE

Handout #2

“Rebekah”

From: The Life Application Study Bible

Some people are initiators. They help get the ball rolling. Rebekah would easily stand out in this group. Her life was characterized by initiative. When she saw a need, she took action, even though the action was not always right.

It was Rebekah's initiative that first caught the attention of Eliezer, the servant Abraham sent to find a wife for Isaac. It was common courtesy to give a drink to a stranger, but it took added character to also fetch water for ten thirsty camels. Later, after hearing the details of Eliezer's mission, Rebekah was immediately willing to be Isaac's bride.

Several later events help us see how initiative can be misdirected. Rebekah was aware that God's plan would be channeled through Jacob, not Esau (Genesis 25:23). So not only did Jacob become her favorite; she actually planned ways to ensure that he would overshadow his older twin. Meanwhile, Isaac preferred Esau. This created a conflict between the couple. She felt justified in deceiving her husband when the time came to bless the sons, and her ingenious plan was carried out to perfection.

Most of the time we try to justify the things we choose to do. Often we attempt to add God's approval to our actions. While it is true that our actions will not spoil God's plan, it is also true that we are responsible for what we do and must always be cautious about our motives. When thinking about a course of action, are you simply seeking God's stamp of approval on something you've already decided to do? Or are you willing to set the plan aside if the principles and commands of God's Word are against the action? Initiative and action are admirable and right when they are controlled by God's wisdom.

Strengths and accomplishments

- When confronted with a need, she took immediate action
- She was accomplishment oriented

Weaknesses and mistakes

- Her initiative was not always balanced by wisdom
- She favored one of her sons
- She deceived her husband

Lessons from her life

- Our actions must be guided by God's Word
- God even makes use of our mistakes in his plan
- Parental favoritism hurts a family

Vital statistics

- Where: Haran, Canaan
- Occupation: Wife, mother, household manager
- Relatives: Grandparents: Nahor and Milcah. Father: Bethuel. Husband: Isaac.
Brother: Laban. Twin sons: Esau and Jacob.

Key verses

"And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother" (Genesis 24:67). "Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Genesis 25:28).

Rebekah's story is told in Genesis 24-27. She is also mentioned in Romans 9:10.

Life Application Study Bible

LESSON TWO

Handout #3

Six Principles of the Marriage Relationship Found in Genesis 2:22-24

1. God brought Eve to Adam – it was not his job to find a mate
2. Unlike the animals, Eve corresponded to him (“*bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh*”)
3. Their marriage relationship necessitated him “Leaving” father and mother (obviously looking forward to future generations since Adam had no father and mother)
4. Marriage requires “cleaving” (the Hebrew word implies pursuit and attachment, joined by commitment”)
5. Marriage should result in oneness (“one flesh” points to the physical body, but in principle would include all that a person is – Mind, Emotions, Will, etc.)
6. Marriage results in nakedness without shame (again this would go beyond just the physical side)

From: “Women of the Bible – Book One”

LESSON TWO

Handout #4

“Did Eve Have A Fair Chance Against Satan?”

Genesis 3:1-6

By: Frederick Osborn

The question is often asked if Adam and Eve had a chance against Satan when he tempted them in the Garden of Eden. He is after all, clever and cunning, a liar, deceiver, and masquerades as an angel of light. So what chance would innocent and trusting Eve have when Satan came to her? The answer to what chance Eve had can be answered by answering some key questions:

- What kind of nature did Eve have?
- Were all of her needs satisfied? Was she hungry, thirsty or tired?
- Did she know God and have direct, unhindered access to Him?
- Did Eve know the truth? Was she given adequate instructions, and was she informed of the consequences of disobedience?
- Did she, like Adam, have dominion over the earth (including the serpent)?
- Was Eve in obedience to God before the temptation and experiencing the benefits of her obedience?

WHEN ARE WE VULNERABLE TO TEMPTATION?

- When we reject the absolute authority of God and His word.

- When we do not believe God really expects absolute obedience, or will excuse sin in our lives.
- When we think there is something better beyond the limited freedom granted to us by God, and choose to define our own boundaries.
- When we want to make our own decisions apart from God.

WHY DID GOD ALLOW EVE TO BE TEMPTED?

- God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden to test their obedience. Freedom without choice is not freedom at all.
- Adam and Eve exercised their free will to choose God or to choose their own way “choose for yourselves today whom you will serve... but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)
- God could have stopped Adam and Eve, but it would have violated the gift of freewill He gave them. They knew the will of God but chose to disobey it.

LESSON TWO

Handout #5

“The Curse on Man Himself and the Disharmony It Brought was Fourfold”

By: Frederick Osborn

1. **Sorrow** – resulting from continual disappointment
2. **Pain and suffering** – signified by the “Thorns”
3. **Sweat and tears** – the “strong crying” of intense struggle against a hostile environment
4. **Physical death** – which would eventually triumph over all man’s efforts, returning everything back to dust “... because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19b)

Jesus came and upon the cross, bore the curse for us that we might be set free from the curse of Adam...

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:4-6

And because Jesus Christ rose from the dead and lives forever, we have this living hope that one day we will live with Him, and there will be no more sorrows, no more pain and suffering, no more tears, and no more death.

“Then I John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” Revelation 21:2-4

LESSON THREE

Handout #6

OUTLINE

ABRAHAM'S & SARAH'S JOURNEY OF FAITH

Genesis 12:1 – 25:18

- I. THE CALLING OF ABRAM
 - A. The place (12:1): Ur of Chaldeans (see Genesis 11:31).
 - B. The Promises to Abram = “The pronouncement of a destiny” (12:2-3)
 1. God will bless Abram and make of him a great nation
 2. Abram will be a blessing to others
 3. Through Abram all the families (nations) of the earth will be blessed
 - C. The Journey begins (12:4-5): Abram travels from Ur to Haran and from Haran to Canaan.
- II. ABRAM JOURNEYS TO CANAAN (12:6-9)
 - A. Abram at Shechem (12:6-7): The Lord promised to give Canaan to Abram, and Abram builds an altar there.
 - B. Abram at Bethel (12:8-9): Abram builds another altar.
- III. ABRAM'S JOURNEY AND FAILURE IN EGYPT (12:10-20)
 - A. Abram loses faith in God's provision and flees from famine in Canaan (12:10)
 - B. Abram loses faith in God's promise of protection and fears for his life because of Sarai. God's plan for Abram's future is jeopardized (12:11-16)
 - C. Abram's failure forces God to intervene to preserve His promise of a great nation (12:17-20)
- IV. THE SEPARATION OF ABRAM AND LOT (13:1-4)
 - A. Abram journeys back to Bethel and restores his fellowship with God (13:1-4)
 - B. Abram and Lot must separate. Lot chooses the wicked, but prosperous city of Sodom to settle (13:5-13)
 - C. Abram journeys away from Sodom and the Lord reaffirms His promises to him (13:14-18)
- V. ABRAM'S LOYALTY TO THE MOST HIGH GOD IS TESTED (14:1-24)
 - A. Alliance led by Chedorlaomer defeats the alliance of five city-states, which includes Sodom. Lot is taken captive (14:1-12)
 - B. Abram rescues Lot and the other captives from Sodom in a surprise attack upon Chedorlaomer's camp (14:13-16)

- C. Abram meets Melchizedek, the King of Salem. Melchizedek blesses Abram, and Abram acknowledges him as “a priest of the God Most High.” Abram refuses to take anything from the King of Sodom and gives Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils recovered from Chedolaomer (14:17-24).
- VI. ABRAM’S JOURNEY CONTINUES AS GOD CONFIRMS HIS COVENANT
- A. Abram’s faith wavers because he has no heir to inherit God’s promises (15:1-3)
 - B. God reassures Abram that his destiny will be fulfilled, and Abram will have an heir. God declares that Abram’s descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. Abram believes God. **Key verse: Genesis 15:6** “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (15:4-6)
 - C. God ratifies His covenant with Abram with blood and revealed details of his descendants in a vision (15:17-21)
- VII. ABRAM’S FAITH FAILS AGAIN – THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL
- A. Rather than wait on God’s timing, Abram and Sarai follow the custom of the day and have Sarai’s servant, Hagar act as surrogate mother for them (16:1-3).
 - B. Conflict between Hagar and Sarai results. After Hagar flees, an angel of the Lord appears to her and tells her to submit to Sarai. The angel also tells Hagar that her son will be called Ishmael (“God hears”) and will be blessed with a great number of descendants. (16:4-14).
 - C. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael. Abram is now eighty six years old (16:15-16).
- VIII. ABRAM’S FAITH GROWS AS THE COVENANT REAFFIRMED, SEALED BY CIRCUMCISION AND TESTED AGAIN
- A. Thirteen years after Ishmael is born, the Lord appears to Abram (17:1-27)
 - 1. The covenant promises to Abram are reaffirmed
 - 2. Circumcision is instituted as a sign of the covenant between Abram’s descendants in the flesh and God.
 - 3. God changes Sarai’s name to Sarah. Confirms that she shall bear Abraham’s son, Isaac, and that the covenant shall be established with him, not Ishmael.
 - 4. Abraham and the males of his entire household are circumcised
 - B. The Lord Himself and two angels visit Abraham near Hebron. Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed (18:1 – 19:38).
 - 1. The Lord reveals that the time has come for Sarah to have a son
 - 2. The Lord reveals to Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah are about to be destroyed. Abraham intercedes for Sodom.
 - 3. Lot rescued from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Story told of Moabite and Ammonite origins.
 - C. Abraham’s faith again fails and he allows Sarah to be taken as a wife of Abimelech. God intervenes once more to preserve His promise to Abraham (20:1-18).

- IX. THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM AND SARAH OF AN HEIR IS FULFILLED (21:1-25:11)
- A. Sarah gives birth to Isaac, the rightful heir of the covenant (21:1-2)
 - B. Conflict between Hagar and Sarah is renewed after Isaac is born. Hagar and Ishmael are cast out. Hagar and Ishmael delivered in the wilderness (21:3-21).
 - C. The covenant between Abraham and Abimelech (21:21-34).
 - D. Abraham passes ultimate test of obedience, and offers his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice according to God's command. The Lord provides a substitute. The covenant promise to Abraham is repeated (22:1-23).
 - E. The death and burial of Sarah (23:1-20).
 - F. Abraham finds a bride for Isaac amongst his kinsmen. Isaac and Rebekah are married (24:1-67).
 - G. Abraham dies at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah (25:1-11).

LESSON THREE

Handout #7

“Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia”

By: Frederick Osborn

The Laws from ancient Mesopotamia provide an important background to understand many of the incidents in Abraham’s life, and in particular the story of his relationships with Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac. Where did Sarah get the idea to have her servant Hagar bear a child for Abraham? And why was Abraham so quick to accept the idea?

Abram and Sarai came from Ur and knew what was permitted under the laws of that land. So when she thought she would never produce an heir for her husband, Sarai did what she understood to be appropriate in that day and procured an heir for Abram through her maid (Gen. 16:1-3). According to the Sumerian laws of Ur-Nammu (founder and ruler of Ur’s Third Dynasty, c.2044 – 2007 B.C.), a husband was allowed to take a concubine as a wife after waiting in vain for his primary wife to bear children. Custom even permitted the primary wife to initiate the arrangement (as in Sarai’s case).

The law at Nuzi (another ancient Mesopotamian city near the Tigris River) and the Code of Hammurabi in Babylonia allowed a man to adopt as legitimate heirs any children he may have fathered through a slave woman (Note Gen. 17:18). Nuzi law also permitted inheritance rights to be transferred to a son born to the primary wife even after she had already adopted her surrogate’s son. In a similar manner Isaac (although born after Ishmael) had the right to be Abraham’s chief heir (Gen. 21:12).

The disinheritance of a son was also allowed in ancient Mesopotamia, but generally it required a court order so that the rights of the son would be protected and the disinheritance might be officially overturned if the father were found to have acted unjustly. Abraham’s hesitancy to comply with Sarah’s demand to expel Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:10, 11) may have been based in part upon the question of the legality of that demand. It was only after God instructed Abraham to listen to his wife because Isaac was the rightful heir, that Abraham complied and sent Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen. 21:12).

In addition to laws concerning the family, certain laws and customs regarding contracts and other agreements mentioned in Genesis were similar to the laws found throughout Mesopotamia. It helps us to understand the stories in Genesis when we are reminded of the fact that the patriarchs did not live in isolation; they lived on the cultural crossroads between East and West and therefore interacted with well-established societies and knew how other people lived. What separated the patriarchs from the other nations was they knew the Lord and obeyed His word over the laws, traditions and customs of the other nations.

The Source for this Handout is:

The “NIV Archaeological Study Bible” pg. 36, 2005, Pub. Zondervan

LESSON THREE

Handout #8

“The Angel of the Lord”

By: Frederick Osborn

A thorough study of the passages of Scripture that refer to the Angel of the Lord shows that while the Angel and the *LORD* (Hebrew = *Yahweh*) are at times distinguished from one another, they are at other times merged into each other, and sometimes in the same passages. It is obvious that these appearances cannot be God Almighty Himself because no man has seen God and lived (Ex. 22:20). God is Spirit (John 4:24) and is therefore invisible to the physical eye. And yet, at the same time, the Angel of the Lord has attributes that ONLY God Almighty has. For example, Exodus 23:20ff implies that the Angel of the Lord must be obeyed and may or may not forgive sin, which only God can do. The prophet Isaiah calls Him “The Angel of God’s Presence”, which is illustrated in Exodus 32:34–33:17 as the Lord declares to Moses, “My presence shall go with you.” Clearly, the Angel of the Lord is portrayed as an angelic being, but He is distinguished from any ordinary angel because He carries with Him in a unique way God’s power and presence.

So the mystery of the Angel of the Lord remains. Bible commentators throughout the centuries have answered the riddle in one of three ways: (1) this angel is like all other angels, but has been given a special commission by God; (2) He may be a temporary vehicle God uses to descend into visibility; (3) He is the pre-incarnation of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Although, no one can say with any absolute certainty that the Angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ, the comparisons from Scripture are overwhelming (see chart below).

The following passages contain references to the Angel of the Lord:

- Gen. 16:7ff – the angel and Hagar
- Gen. 18 – Abraham intercedes with the angel for Sodom
- Gen. 22:11ff – the angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac
- Gen. 24:7, 40 – Abraham sends Eliezer and promises the angel’s protection
- Gen. 31:11ff – that angel who appears to Jacob says “I am the God of Beth-el”
- Gen. 32:24ff – Jacob wrestles with the Angel and says, “I have seen God face to face.”
- Gen. 48:15f – Jacob speaks of God and the Angel as identical
- Ex. 3 (compare Acts 7:30ff) – the Angel appears to Moses in the burning bush
- Ex. 13:21; Ex. 14:19 (compare Num. 20:16) – God or the Angel leads Israel out of Egypt
- Ex. 23:20ff – the people are commanded to obey the angel

- Ex. 32:34–33:17 (compare Is. 63:9) – Moses pleads for the presence of God with His people
- Josh. 5:13–6:2 – the Angel appears to Joshua
- Jud. 2:1-5 – the Angel speaks to the people
- Jud. 6:11ff – the angel appears to Gideon

<u>ATTRIBUTE</u>	<u>ANGEL OF THE LORD</u>	<u>JESUS CHRIST</u>
Is seen as God	Genesis 16:10, 13	John 20:28 John 14:9
Speaks as if he is God	Judges 2:1, 2	John 10:30
Is separate from God And obedient to Him	1 Chronicles 21:27	John 8:38 (Note: Even though Jesus spoke with the authority of God, he was still obedient to God. This is seen most clearly in his obedience to die on the Cross.)
Is sent from the Father	Judges 13:9	John 8:42 John 6:38
Speaks with all the Authority of God, gives commands	Judges 13:12-14	Matthew 7:28, 29 Matthew 8:27
Forgives sin	Zechariah 3:3, 4	Matthew 9:2
Acts as judge and Avenger of Israel	Joshua 5:13, 14	Revelation 19:11-16 (Note: not specifically Called “Angel of the Lord” but is same as Ex. 3 & 1 Chron. 21:6)
1 Chronicles 21:6		
Accepts Worship	Judges 6:19-21	Matthew 28:5-9
Is Comforter	1 Kings 19:3-8	Matthew 11:28-30
Uses “I AM” to refer to Himself	Exodus 3:14	John 8:58
Makes special promises	Genesis 16:10	John 14:1-3

LESSON THREE

Handout #9

“Circumcision and the New Testament”

Acts chapter 10 records a significant event in the life of the church. Up until this time, salvation was “of the Jews” (John 4:22), but from this day forward “the hour” Jesus spoke of in John 2:23 had come for all (circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles) to worship God “in spirit and truth” (Acts 10:44, 45). The Book of Acts records the historic breaking down of the wall of the separation between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. “All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed,” because for the first time, believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit even though they were not circumcised.

Galatians 5:1-6 teaches us that those who submit to circumcision are under obligation to keep the whole law (v. 3), but those who seek to be justified by the law have been “severed” from Christ and have fallen from grace (v. 4). Circumcision was intended to be a sign of the covenant and not the fulfillment thereof because “faith working through love” is the fulfillment of the law (v. 6, note also Gal. 5:14).

Read Ephesians 2:1-22

<u>CIRCUMCISED</u>	<u>UNCIRCUMCISED</u>	<u>IN CHRIST</u>
1. Of the flesh	Separate and excluded Far off	Broke down the dividing wall
1. Under Law (no hope)	Without God in the world (no hope)	Both have peace with God (new hope)
3. Enmity with Gentiles	Enmity with Jews	Made the two into one new man, thus abolishing the enmity
4. Citizens of God’s household	Strangers and aliens	Fellow citizens of God’s household

By the blood of Jesus, the circumcised and the uncircumcised are “...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord...”

LESSON FOUR

Handout #10

“The Judges of Israel” Judges 3 – 16

Judge	Years Judged	Actions	References
Othniel	40	Captured a powerful Canaanite city	Judges 3:7-11
Ehud	80	Killed Eglon and defeated the Moabites	Judges 3:12-30
Shagmar	Unknown	Killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad	Judges 3:31
Deborah	40	With Barak defeated Sisera and the Canaanites	Judges 4 – 5
Gideon	40	He destroyed his family idols; used a fleece to determine God’s will; raised an army of 10,000, and defeated 135,000 Midianites with 300 soldiers	Judges 4-5
Tola	23	He judged Israel for 23 years	Judges 10:1-2
Jair	22	He had 30 sons	Judges 10:3-5
Jephthah	6	He made a rash vow; defeated the Amorites; and later battled Ephraim	Judges 10:6 – 12:7
Ibzan	7	He had 30 sons and 30 daughters	Judges 12:8-10
Elon	10	Judged Israel for 10 years	Judges 12:11-12
Abdon	8	He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, each of whom had is own donkey	Judges 12:13-15
Samson	20	He was a Nazirite; killed a lion with his bare hands; burned the Philistine wheat fields; killed 1,000 Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone; tore off the iron gate of a Philistine city; was betrayed by Delilah; and destroyed thousands of Philistines in one last mighty act	Judges 13 –16

LESSON FIVE

Handout #11

“Rebuilding Jericho”

Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, "Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates." Joshua 6:26

The first act of God's judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan happened when the children of Israel came out of the Wilderness and surrounded the city of Jericho. They saw God bring down the walls protecting the city which resulted in its total destruction (Joshua 6). The 400 year old prophecy (Gen. 15:13-16) that Israel would be slaves in the land of Egypt until “the iniquity of the Amorites” was complete had come to pass (NOTE:“Amorites” is the ancient term for the people who lived in Canaan). The children of Israel would be the instrument God would use to purge the land of gross idolatry and all the wickedness it promoted. As a sign to all who remembered Jericho, that once powerful city was condemned to perpetual desolation to serve these purposes:

1. To demonstrate the full impact of God's judgment. When it comes there is no time or place to escape it; it brings total destruction and ruin without remedy or repair.
2. It would instill fear in the hearts of the Canaanites and make them less likely to resist Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. The choice before the Canaanites was clear: leave or be destroyed.
3. The ruins of Jericho would serve as a monument of the wrath of God against those who shed innocent blood.

Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy. These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. (Prov. 6:15-19)

4. It would also serve as a testament of God's divine intervention on Israel's behalf during their conquest of Canaan. The ruin of the once proud and powerful city that blocked their entrance to the Promised Land was a witness of God's favor to Israel. It would also serve as a rebuke to those later generations of Israel who, in their ingratitude, forgot what God had done for them in the past.

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

“Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.” 1 Kings 16:30-34

King Ahab was leading Israel to new depths of moral and spiritual decay. Jeroboam, the first King of the northern tribes, established the golden calf worship at Dan and Bethel. King Ahab, not content to only follow in Jeroboam's footsteps, compounded his sins by adopting the Baal worship of his idolatrous queen, Jezebel; then he gave her

an open door to propagate her wicked religion throughout the land. The spiritual condition of the kingdom was so bad that Ahab's subject, Hiel, felt he could ignore Joshua's warning and rebuild Jericho against the Lord's command.

It is interesting to note here that the rebuilding of Jericho is described in the context of the expansion of Baal worship into Israel; in addition to its base sex worship and religious prostitution, human sacrifice was common. It was a frequent practice in the Baal cult to kill young children and bury them in the foundations of a house or public building at the time of construction in order to placate their gods. Joshua's pronouncement, "Cursed be the man..." would certainly apply to any man who worshiped Baal; and it would serve God's sense of justice when Hiel in his ignorance and idolatry, performed the evil deed of sacrificing his own sons himself, fulfilling Joshua's prophecy by his own hand.

By: Frederick Osborn

LESSON FIVE

Handout #12

“Ahab and Jezebel Manipulate People Because They Cannot Move them”

From “The Maxwell Leadership Bible”

By: John Maxwell

Few couples in Scripture look less attractive than King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. We get acquainted with their ugly style at the end of 1 Kings. Because they suffered an almost total lack of leadership charisma, they had to use manipulation, selfishness, and cunning to get what they wanted.

Charisma has been defined as a magnetic personal attraction that draws others to the leader, making them feel better about themselves. Effective leaders do well to develop some level of charisma.

In Greek, the word *charisma* means, “gift.” God gives a degree of charisma to everyone. Leaders are to give it away to others; charismatic people are others-centered. So why did Ahab and Jezebel fail to demonstrate any charisma?

1. They set out to selfishly build their own kingdoms (22:8).
2. They used people in order to get ahead; anyone was expendable (19:2).
3. They worried about image and lived under false pretences (21:8-13).
4. They sulked and got angry when they didn't get their way (21:4).
5. They pretended to be someone they were not (21:25-27).
6. They abused the authority they had been given (21:18, 19).

Ahab and Jezebel felt no incentive to develop charisma because their position allowed them to use people. Why would they need to inspire others to cooperate with them? Wasn't their word law? Godly leaders must avoid this wicked attitude at all costs.

Roadblocks to Charisma

To build charisma, be others-minded. Leaders who think about others and their concerns before thinking of themselves quickly develop charisma.

How would you rate your own charisma? Are other people naturally attracted to you? Are you well liked? Consider the following roadblocks to charisma. Do you possess any of these?

- **Pride:** Nobody wants to follow a leader who thinks he is better than everyone else. Arrogant leaders lose the respect of others.
- **Insecurity:** If you are uncomfortable with yourself, others will be, too. Only secure leaders can provide a secure atmosphere.

- **Moodiness:** If people never know what to expect from you, they stop expecting anything. Eventually, they won't even approach you.
- **Selfishness:** People can tell if you are using them merely to reach your own goal. No healthy person stays for long in such a unhealthy environment.
- **Perfectionism:** People respect the desire for excellence, but loathe unrealistic expectations. No one wants to feel the program is more important than they are.
- **Cynicism:** People don't want to be rained on by someone who sees a cloud around every silver lining. Negative leaders repulse healthy followers.

What are the positive traits of a Charismatic Leader?

Most people think of charisma as something mystical, almost indefinable. They think it comes at birth or not at all. But that's not true. Charisma is the ability to draw people to you or your cause. Some people possess more of it naturally. Like other character traits, however, it can be learned. Note the traits of a charismatic leader:

1. *Confidence*

Charismatic leaders display poise and optimism as a buoyant communicator.

2. *Conviction*

Charismatic leaders know where they are going and what they have to say. They speak straight from the heart.

3. *Connection*

Charismatic leaders are not focused on themselves, but on others. They magnetically connect with their audience because they are focused on them.

4. *Compassion*

Charismatic leaders exude warmth and love. They give the people practical, or realistic answers to their needs.

Charismatic leaders motivate people by their words and deeds into action. They do not need to manipulate or compel others to follow them.

Four Steps to Build Charisma:

One: LOVE LIFE. Celebrate; don't complain. Enjoy the journey.

Two: EXPECT THE BEST. Expect the best of people and treat them well.

Three: GIVE PEOPLE HOPE: Everyone looks for hope; leaders deal it out.

Four: SHARE YOURSELF: Be vulnerable and real. Share your heart, wisdom, and resources.

LESSON SIX

HANDOUT #13

The Women Jesus Knew and Met (Other Than His mother)

Peter's Mother-in-law	Matthew 8:14-15 Mark 1:29-31 Luke 4:38-39
The Widow Whose Son Had Died	Luke 7:11-16
The Women who Traveled With Jesus (Including: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, etc.)	Luke 8:1-3
A Dead Girl & A Sick Woman	Matthew 9:18-26 Mark 5:21-43 Luke 8:40-56
The Samaritan Woman	John 4:4-42
The Canaanite (Syrophoenician) Woman	Matthew 15:21-28 Mark 7:24-30
The Adulterous Woman	John 8:1-11
The Sinful Woman Who Anointed Jesus	Luke 7:36-50
Martha And Mary At Home	Luke 10:38-42
Martha And Mary At The Tomb of Lazarus	John 11:17-37
A Woman in the Crowd	Luke 11:27-28
A Crippled Woman	Luke 13:10-16
The Poor Widow	Mark 12:41-44 Luke 21:1-4
The Women Who Anointed Jesus at Bethany (Note: Handout #18)	Matthew 26:6-13 Mark 14:3-9 John 12:1-8
Weeping Women Follow Jesus To the Cross	Luke 23:27-31

(Note: for a complete account of the women who were at the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus see **Handout #19**)

LESSON SIX

Handout #14

“Mary's Calling” Luke 1:31-33

The angel, Gabriel, explained the role that God's favor had decreed for Mary. She would be the one through whom the long anticipated Savior and Messiah of the Jews would come. But Gabriel's announcement far exceeded anything Mary could have expected:

- She would conceive and bring forth a Son.
- She would name her Son Jesus (“Savior”)
- Her Son would be great.
- Her Son would be “the Son of the Highest” (that is God)
- God would give Him the throne of David.
- Her Son would reign over Israel forever.
- Her Son's kingdom would never end.

LESSON SIX

Handout #15

“Famous Songs in the Bible”

WHERE

Exodus 15:1-21

PURPOSE

Moses' song of deliverance and praise after God led Israel out of Egypt and saved them by parting the Red Sea: Miriam joined in the singing, too.

Numbers 21:17

Israel's song of praise to God for giving them water in the wilderness

Deuteronomy 32:1-43

Moses' song of thanksgiving and praise as the Hebrews were about to enter the Promised Land; recounted Israel's history

Judges 5:2-31

Deborah and Barak's song of praise thanking God for Israel's victory over King Jabin's army at Mount Tabor

2 Samuel 22:2-51

David's song of thanks and praise to God for rescuing him from Saul and his other enemies

Song of Songs

Solomon's song of love celebrating the union of husband and wife

Isaiah 26:1

Isaiah's prophetic song about how the redeemed will sing in the New Jerusalem

Ezra 3:11

Israel's song of praise at the completion of the Temple's foundation

LESSON SIX

Handout #16

“Joseph”

Life Application Study Bible Notes

The strength of what we believe is measured by how much we are willing to suffer for those beliefs. Joseph was a man with strong beliefs. He was prepared to do what was right, despite the pain he knew it would cause. But Joseph had another trait: He not only tried to do what was right, he also tried to do it in the right way.

When Mary told Joseph about her pregnancy, Joseph knew the child was not his. His respect for Mary's character and the explanation she gave him, as well as her attitude toward the expected child, must have made it hard to think his bride had done something wrong. Still, someone else was the child's father—and it was mind-boggling to accept that the "someone else" was God.

Joseph decided he had to break the engagement, but he was determined to do it in a way that would not cause public shame to Mary. He intended to act with justice and love.

At this point, God sent a messenger to Joseph to confirm Mary's story and open another way of obedience for Joseph—to take Mary as his wife. Joseph obeyed God, married Mary, and honored her virginity until the baby was born.

We do not know how long Joseph lived his role as Jesus' earthly father—he is last mentioned when Jesus was 12 years old. But Joseph trained his son in the trade of carpentry, made sure he had good spiritual training in Nazareth, and took the whole family on the yearly trip to Jerusalem for the Passover, which Jesus continued to observe during his adult years.

Joseph knew Jesus was someone special from the moment he heard the angel's words. His strong belief in that fact and his willingness to follow God's leading empowered him to be Jesus' chosen earthly father.

Strengths and accomplishments

- A man of integrity
- A descendant of King David
- Jesus' legal and earthly father
- A person sensitive to God's guidance and willing to do God's will no matter what the consequence

Lessons from his life

- God honors integrity
- Social position is of little importance when God chooses to use us

- Being obedient to the guidance we have from God leads to more guidance from him
- Feelings are not accurate measures of the rightness or wrongness of an action

Vital statistics

- Where: Nazareth, Bethlehem
- Occupation: Carpenter
- Relatives: Wife: Mary. Children: Jesus, James, Joses, Judas, Simon, and daughters.
- Contemporaries: Herod the Great, John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna

Key verses

“Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.’” Matthew 1:19-20

Joseph's story is told in Matthew 1:16-2:23; Luke 1:26-2:52.

Life Application Study Bible.

LESSON SEVEN

Handout #17

“Samaritan Idol Worship”

Chapter 17 of 2 Kings describes the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.. After the conquest was complete, Sargon II took away a large number of the Israelites and scattered them throughout his empire. Then he brought in other conquered people from the Assyrian Empire and settled them in the land once inhabited by the Israelites. This was done in order to keep conquered people from rising up once the army moved on. The people who were brought to Israel from other conquered nations continued to worship their own gods. They made idols of these gods, and put them in the shrines on the high places they set up throughout the land. Chapter 17 of 2 Kings also tells the story of why and how Yahweh worship was brought back to the land.

So in time, the foreigners who were settled in Israel intermarried with the Jewish remnant that was allowed to remain in the land by their conquerors. They became a mixed race of peoples called Samaritans. By the time Jesus came to the well at Sychar (John 4), the Samaritans had adopted the worship of the God of Israel along with the foreign gods of the lands from which they came; they established Mt. Gerizim – as opposed to the temple in Jerusalem – to be their most holy place. This caused great animosity between the Jews in Judea and Galilee who were descendants of those who maintained ethnic and racial purity throughout their Babylonian captivity and after returning from exile.

Throughout the Scriptures, the prophets of God used the metaphor of adultery to describe those Israelites who engaged in worship of other gods. The prophet, Hosea, is one of the best examples of how God communicated this thought to His wayward people. God commands Hosea, *“Go, take for yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord”* (Hosea 1:2 NKJV). The prophecies of Hosea are used to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness to God, *“... for she is not my wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her*

sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts,” (2:2a NKJV). Hosea closes with one final plea from God for His people to repent and return to Him before it is too late:

*“O Israel, return to the Lord your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity;
take words with you,
and return to the Lord.
Say to Him,
‘Take away all iniquity;
Receive us graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips...”* (14:1, 2 NKJV)

THE GODS OF SAMARIA (2 KINGS 17:29-41)

1. From Babylon – ***Succoth Benoth*** (“booths of the daughters”); the name suggests booths or tents used for idolatrous prostitution. Worshipers believed having sexual relations with a temple prostitute would arouse the fertility god or goddess and guarantee fertile fields and herds.
2. From Cuthah – ***Nergal*** (“hero”); Assyrian god of war and hunting; also known as the “storm ruler”, he was worshiped to secure victory in battle (associated with the Greek god Mars and also was believed to represent the deified hero and hunter Nimrod (Genesis 10:8, 9).
3. From Hammath – ***Ashima*** (“I will make desolate”), the god of drunkenness and gross indulgence; associated with the Greek god Pan, worshipers would indulge in drunken orgies and revelries.

4. From the Avvites – *Nibhaz* (“the barker”) and *Tartak* (“chained, bound, or shut up”); not a lot is known about these gods except for the forms, indicated by their names. Nibhaz may have been related to the Egyptian jackal-headed god of the underworld, Anubis. Tartak was in the form of an ass. Both gods were worshiped by those seeking long life, and material prosperity.

5. From the Sepharvites – *Adrammelech* (“splendor of the king”) & his female counterpart, *Anammelech* (“image of the king”). Adrammelech was related to the Canaanite god Molech; he was worshiped in nature as the Sun god & god of fire. Children were sacrificed to Adrammelech by being burned alive. Anammelech was the female consort of the Sun god. She was worshiped in nature as the moon, which reflected the light of the Sun. They represented the male/virility and female/fertility; worshipers believed these gods made them, their fields and flocks

LESSON SEVEN

Handout #18

“The Women Who Anointed Jesus”

The first

Luke 7:36-50

Location

Jerusalem

Place

Home of Simon
the Pharisee

When

Six days before
Passover

Material

Alabaster jar of
ointment

Action

Bathed feet with
tears, kissed feet,
anointed them

Responses

The Pharisee:
Could not believe
Jesus would allow
a sinner to touch Him

Jesus' Answer

Taught Simon about
God's forgiveness

Jesus says to woman

“Your sins are
forgiven.”

The second

John 12:1-8

Bethany

Home of Lazarus
the leper

Two days before
Passover

Pound of perfume
made of *nard

Anointed feet and
wiped with hair

Judas Iscariot:
Thought it was a
waste of money

Rebuked Judas

“For the day of
My burial.”

The third

Matt. 26:6-13
Mark 14:3-9

Bethany

House of Simon

Alabaster jar of
*nard

Poured ointment
on head

Disciples (“some who were
there): Indignant because
they thought it was too
extravagant

Rebuked those who criticized
the woman

“Prepared me for burial.”
“What she has done will be
told in remembrance of her.”

* **Spikenard** (*Nardostachys grandiflora* or *Nardostachys jatamansi*; also called **nard**, **nardin**, and **muskroot**) is a flowering plant of the Valerian family that grows in the Himalayas of China, India and Nepal. The plant grows to about 1m in height and has pink, bell-shaped flowers. Spikenard rhizomes (underground stems) can be crushed and distilled into an intensely aromatic amber-colored essential oil, which is very thick in consistency. Nard oil is used as a perfume, incense, a sedative, and an herbal medicine said to fight insomnia, birth difficulties, and other minor ailments.

LESSON SEVEN

Handout # 19

THE WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE EVENTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Not all the women involved in the events of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection were together for each event. Some were at one place, some at another. Some involved are not named. All those named can be listed as follows: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Salome, who was the wife of Zebedee, sister of Mary, and also the mother of James and John; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the wife of Cleopas (Alphaeus) and mother of James (the Less or the Younger) and Joses (Joseph); Joanna.

ORDER OF PLACES/EVENTS	PEOPLE	SCRIPTURE
At the Cross during the Crucifixion.	Jesus, Mary mother of Jesus, Salome, Mary Magdalene, Mary (James and Joses), Roman soldiers	Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:23-30
At the tomb when Jesus was buried.	Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary (Joses), plus Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus	Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-55; John 19:38-42
At their lodgings they prepared some spices before the Sabbath and then bought more at the marketplace after the Sabbath. They prepared those to anoint the body of Jesus.	Mary Magdalene, Mary (James and Joses), Salome	Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; Luke 24:1b
Sunday Morning-Earthquake at the tomb, Angel rolled away the stone, Roman guards shook for fear.	Angel, Roman guards	Matthew 28:2-4

At the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. The women found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. Jesus was not there.	Mary Magdalene, Mary (James the Less), Salome, Joanna. The guards were apparently gone.	Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:2-3, 10; John 20:1
Two angels stood by them in shining garments and proclaimed that Jesus had risen just as He had predicted. They remembered Jesus' words.	Mary Magdalene, Mary (James the Less), Salome, Joanna, two angels.	Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8, 10
They ran to Simon Peter and John and the rest to inform them that Jesus was missing and to tell them the message of the angels.	Mary Magdalene, Mary (James the Less), Salome, Joanna.	Matthew 28:7-8; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:2
Some ran back to the tomb and looked in, seeing the linen wrappings where the body of Jesus had been.	Peter, John, Mary Magdalene	Luke 24:12; John 20:3-9
Peter and John left the tomb. Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb weeping. She looked into the tomb and saw two angels.	Mary Magdalene, Two angels	John 20:10-12
The angels questioned Mary about her weeping. She was still thinking His body had been placed somewhere else.	Mary Magdalene, Two angels	John 20:13
Mary saw Jesus and thought it was the attendant in the garden. This was the First Resurrection Appearance of Jesus.	Jesus, Mary Magdalene	John 20:14; Mark 16:9
Jesus questioned Mary about her weeping. She offered to take the body from wherever it had been laid. Jesus spoke her name, "Mary" and she recognized Him declaring, "Rabboni-Master." This was the First Resurrection Appearance of Jesus.	Jesus, Mary Magdalene	John 20:15-16
Mary Magdalene grabbed Jesus, and He told her to stop clinging to Him. He commanded her to go to the disciples, "My brethren," and tell them of His resurrection.	Jesus, Mary Magdalene	John 20:17
Mary ran back to the disciples and	Mary Magdalene, the disciples	John 20:18

told them, "I have seen the Lord," and told them what He had said to her.		
Jesus met the other women on the road from the tomb. They "took hold of His feet and worshiped Him." Jesus commanded them not to be afraid, but to go and tell "My brethren" that He would meet them in Galilee.	"The women" (Matthew 28:5)	Matthew 28:9-10
Jesus also appeared eight other times after His Resurrection.	The two on the road to Emmaus, to Peter, to the disciples minus Thomas, to the disciples with Thomas, to seven of the disciples at the charcoal fire on the shore of Galilee, to more than 500 in Galilee, to James, to the Eleven at His Ascension, to Paul on the Damascus Road. It is likely that some of the women of the Gospels (named and unnamed) were at some of these appearances as well.	Luke 24:13-53; Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:12-20; John 20:19-29; 21:1-25; Acts 1:1-11; 9:1-19; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8

Following God – Learning Life Principles from the Women of the Bible, Book Two: A Bible Study by Wayne Barber, Eddie Rasnake, Richard Shepherd.

LESSON NINE

Handout # 20

THE CORINTHIANS' QUESTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

The Corinthians have raised six questions about single and married life that Paul answers in 1 Corinthians. Several reflect the Greek tendency to regard the physical side of existence as evil.

- Are married couples to continue normal sexual relations after conversion? Yes (7:1-7).
- Should single people marry? Paul prefers the single life – but only for those with the gift of self-control (8-9).
- Is divorce between Christians permissible? No (10-11).
- What about the unconverted husband or wife? The Christian is to stick to his pagan partner unless that partner wants a separation (12-16).
- This question is not so clear. Most likely it is: ‘Should engaged couples marry?’ This must be a matter for personal decision, but in the very troubled times Paul sees ahead, single people will find it easier to work out their Christian priorities (25-38).
- May widows remarry? Yes. But Paul qualifies this (39-40).

From: Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible, Edited by: David Alexander, Pat Alexander, Willam B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, Copyright 1973

LESSON NINE

Handout # 21

EIGHT ISSUES IN THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. Paul's authority as an apostle had been challenged, so Paul defended his authority against the false teachers (chapters 2 – 4)
2. Paul rebuked the church for not disciplining the blatant sin of one of its members. Their laxness in dealing with sin could become a severe problem (chapter 5).
3. Paul explained that the believers should not take one another to the civil courts but should handle their disputes among themselves (6:1-8).
4. Paul's teaching about freedom in Christ had been changed to the point that some thought that even fornication was allowable among believers. Paul corrected that error by explaining that freedom in Christ did not mean freedom to sin (6:9-20).
5. Paul answered the questions about marriage that the Corinthians had sent to him. Many new Christians were already married to unbelievers and did not know what to do. Other new Christians did not know whether or not they should marry. Paul gave forthright advice on the matter (chapter 7).
6. Paul answered questions about dealing with a world filled with idolatry. Surrounded by the pagan religious cults and immorality of Corinth, the new believers wondered about how to deal with the issue

- of eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul explained freedom in Christ yet also held them responsible to deal carefully with those among them with weak consciences in these matters (chapters 8 – 10).
7. Paul delineated matters of respect and order in worship services. Male and female roles needed to be understood in the context of this time period and culture (chapters 11 – 14).
 8. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of their wonderful faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because false teachers had come along denying it as truth. Paul defended the resurrection and explained that without it, their faith was worthless (chapter 15).

From: Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps Neil S. Wilson and Linda K. Taylor, 2001, Tyndale House Publishers
Publishers



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BOOKS WRITTEN BY FREDERICK

1. *Jesus Over India: A 52 Week Journey Through the Heart of India*
2. ***Building Wealth* (English) eBook (available on Amazon.com)**
3. ***Church Planting Movements* (Revised - English) eBook (available on Amazon.com)**
4. *Exploring the New Testament* (English) – Authentic Publishers, Secunderabad, India
Exploring the New Testament (Telugu) – Authentic Publishers, Secunderabad, India
5. ***Our Jehovah Rapha: A Christ Centered Holistic Approach to Wellness* (English) eBook (available on Amazon.com)**
6. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming a Disciple Like Jesus, Study Guide* (English) Printed by: Bibles for All Ministries
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12. *Exploring the Old Testament: Part One – The Pentateuch* (English) Printed By Bibles for All Ministries
13. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements* (English) Printed by Bibles for All Ministries
14. ***The Church in Crisis: Four Essays on Contemporary Issues for Christians in the 21st Century* (English) eBook (Available on Amazon.com)**