

Creative Living Bible Study




The Challenges *of Womanhood II*

Studies on Women of the Bible

With an Overview of Biblical History

This book belongs to:



The Challenges *of Womanhood II*

Studies on Women of the Bible

With an Overview of Biblical History

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THE CHALLENGES OF WOMANHOOD II

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us...” (1 Corinthians 10:11), Paul declares. “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). He is writing about the value of the Scriptures as they document the life experiences and choices of men and women of past ages. Here is the value of studying the 24 women we covered in *Challenges of Womanhood I** and the 25 additional women we will observe in this study. Each woman will help us learn something about healthy, constructive living—things to avoid and things to pursue. We will see that while societies and customs come and go, God and His truth are trustworthy and unchanged by the years.

We will also study these women within the timeline of biblical history as it records the unfolding of God’s wonderful plan of redemption for mankind. This will enrich our understanding of the Bible as a whole with its amazing continuity and harmony.

When women start talking about the real life experiences of other women, there is no loss for discussion. Add to this the topical studies on the challenges we face as women, and things come to life. But it is my prayer that this study will also draw you closer to God as we study the timeless wisdom and truth He offers for the challenges we face as women.

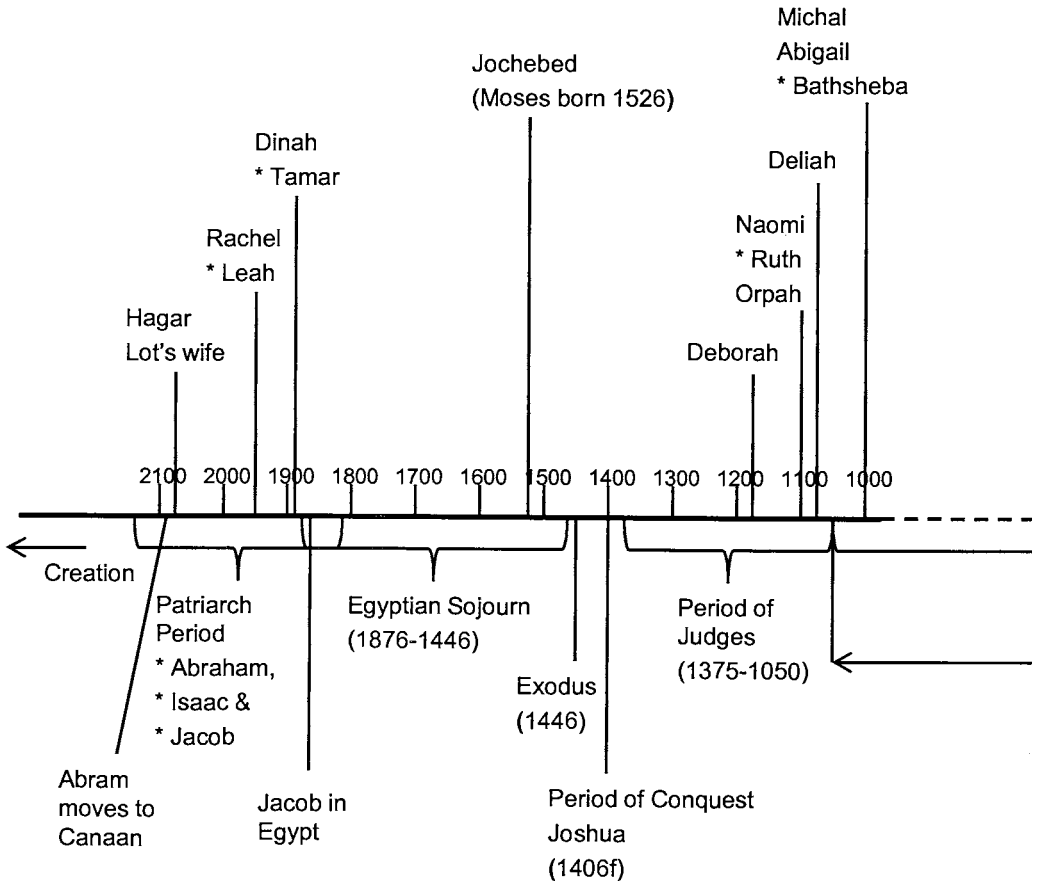


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* Women studied in *Challenges of Womanhood I*
Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, Potiphar’s Wife, Miriam, Rahab, Peninnah, Hannah, The Queen of Sheba, Widow of Zarephath, The Shunammite, The Jewish Maid, Esther, Job’s Wife, Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, A Widow Who Gave All, Martha of Bethany, The Samaritan Woman, Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla

Timeline

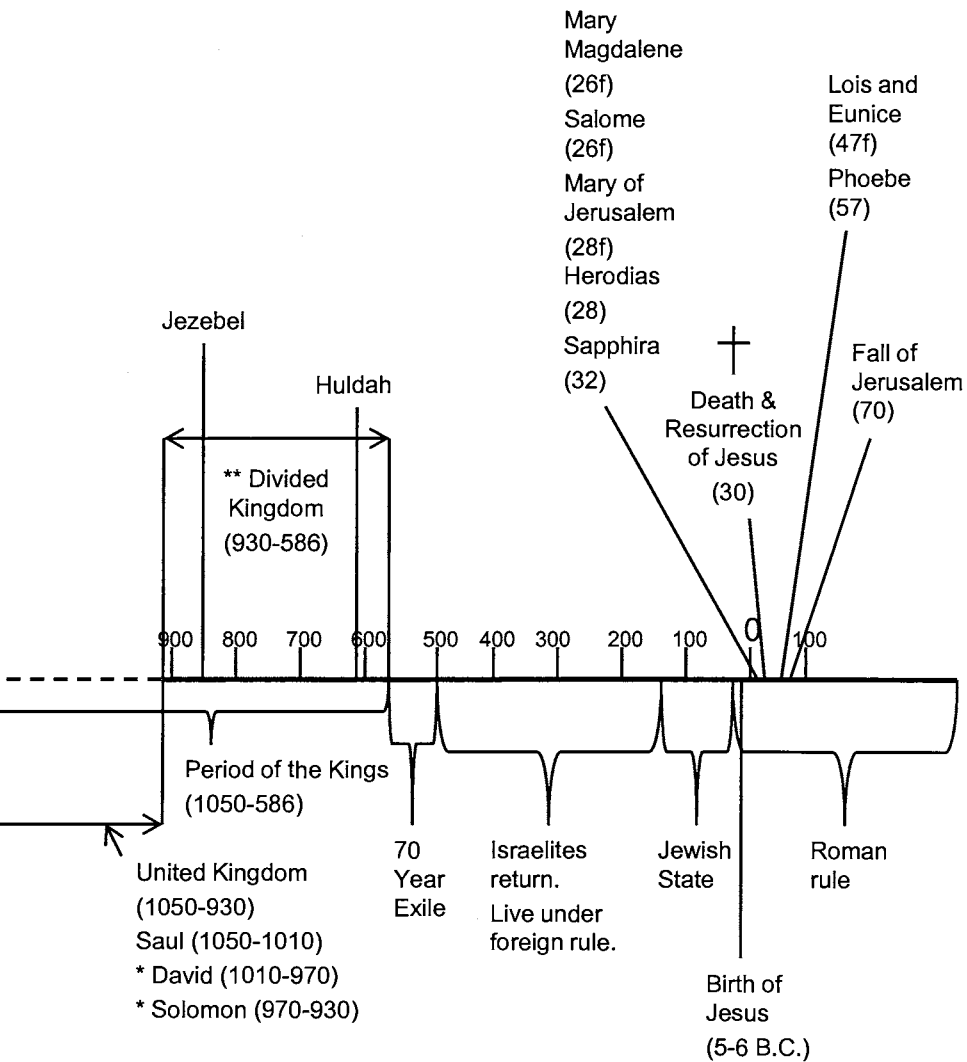
(Dates before 1000 B.C. are uncertain.)



* In the line of Christ.

** Fall of Northern Kingdom (Israel) to Assyria (722 B.C.)

Fall of Southern Kingdom (Judah) to Babylon (586 B.C.)



LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who studies the universe stands in awe of the miracle that brought it into being. Scientists know that the universe, with its 300 billion galaxies with billions of stars in each, had a beginning. Some call it the “big bang,” which it most likely was indeed. Regardless, Genesis chapters 1-3 declare that God brought about this miracle. Genesis states the universe did not appear by itself out of nothing, but rather, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God—a timeless, spaceless, all-powerful, eternal Being—said, “Let there be...” and it came into being.

The gargantuan expanses and precision dynamics of the universe were formed at His command. God spoke again, and our tiny world was positioned in just the right place in the universe to support the magnificent life forms God then created upon it. And among those life forms, God created man like Himself to be a moral being, able to make choices and to relate personally to God and other people.

Then, we are told, God gave the first couple, Adam and Eve, a choice to either follow Him and live or disobey Him and die. They disregarded God’s warning, chose not to obey Him, and the results in our world were catastrophic. As God had warned, they died spiritually (were cut off from a relationship with God) and would also, along with all their descendants, die physically. Nature fell under the spell of evil, too, as it began suffering from decay and death (Romans 8:20-21).

But Genesis also tells us that even as God exacted the foretold consequences, He promised a Redeemer would come (Genesis 3:15b). The rest of the Bible, with its 66 books written over a period of 1500

years in three languages on three continents by more than 44 authors, tells the unfolding story of this plan of God to fix mankind's broken relationship with Him.

This plan began to unfold as God called one man, Abraham, to leave his homeland and follow Him to the land God would show him. There, God promised Abraham that a great nation would come from his offspring, and out of that nation, blessing would come to the whole world (Genesis 12:1-3). We know now this would come through the knowledge of God from the Scriptures and ultimately through the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ. He would take the penalty for man's sin on Himself on the cross (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22), making it possible for those who believe in Him to be declared righteous and live with God forever.

The women in this study will span the 2200 years of history in which God's plan of redemption unfolded. We will start with Hagar in the time of Abraham and will end with Eunice and Lois who lived during the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles in the first century A.D. Though the cultures of these various women are foreign, we will see that we still have much in common. The choices we face—about God, about life, about doing good or evil—have not changed through the ages. Neither has God's love, His truth, and His wonderful plan of redemption.

As we study these women alongside a survey of biblical history, we have an exciting opportunity to receive a double blessing—of wisdom for daily living *and* security in the eternal plan of a loving heavenly Father.

HAGAR

God called Abraham to leave all that was familiar in his Chaldean homeland of Ur and follow Him to a foreign land where God promised to make Abraham the father of a great nation. In time, his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and would bring blessing to the entire world (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:8).

Abraham believed God for these great promises, and at 75 years old, he and his wife Sarah, who was 65, along with his nephew Lot and family, moved to the land of Canaan where they lived a nomadic life dwelling in tents.

However, years passed, and Sarah remained childless. For God's promises to be fulfilled, they needed an heir. In her desperation, Sarah insisted she and Abraham resort to a custom of the times to bear a son. With Abraham's agreement, she gave her Egyptian maid *Hagar* to sleep with him. According to the custom, Hagar's child would be considered Sarah's,¹ and could provide the heir needed for God to make Abraham a great nation.

Now Hagar probably had no say in the matter. She became the victim of Sarah and Abraham's scheming as they ran ahead of God. Their lack of faith in God's ability and plan would have far-reaching effects as the child born, Ishmael, would father the Arab nations that continue to strive with Israel to this very day.

Nevertheless, Hagar's pregnancy raised Sarah's maid to a place of a secondary wife, or concubine. As such, Hagar became insolent toward Sarah, who in turn complained to Abraham. Caught weakly in the middle, he told her to handle the situation as she saw fit. So Sarah treated Hagar harshly, and Hagar ran away...down the dusty road toward Shur and her homeland of Egypt.

But alone in the wilderness, Hagar became afraid. It must have been a great relief when a calm and gracious angel from the LORD (YHWH)² appeared to her by a spring on the way to Shur. There, as God spoke to her through the angel, He told Hagar to go back and submit to Sarah's authority. He promised Hagar that her son, who should be named Ishmael (meaning "God hears"), would have countless descendants. He would father a great tribe of wild, or hostile, people who would be at odds with everyone (Genesis 16:12; cf. 25:18).

Taking in good news and bad, Hagar rejoiced that the living God saw her and cared for her situation. She returned and must have told everyone the story, because Abraham indeed named their son Ishmael as the angel had instructed.

Thirteen years later, the LORD appeared to Abraham and told him Sarah would have the promised heir in one year. Abraham fell on his face and laughed (Genesis 17:17). When Sarah found out, she laughed, too (Genesis 18:12-14). Sure enough, one year later, when Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham 100, Isaac was born. His name meant “laughter.” Sarah was even able to nurse him (Genesis 21:7)!

After the baby was weaned at age three, Hagar’s son, Ishmael, now 17, began to mock Isaac. Sarah implored Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac” (Genesis 21:10). The idea of sending his son, Ishmael, and his mother, Hagar, away distressed Abraham. But God told Abraham to do as Sarah wished, because as Abraham’s son, God was going to make Ishmael the father of a great nation, too.

With absolute trust in what God had told him, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with only a container of water and some bread. Hagar again found herself in the wilderness, but this time watching her son die of thirst after their water ran out. As she and the boy both sat crying, God’s angel spoke from heaven to Hagar. He told her not to fear, that as God had promised, Ishmael would father a great nation. Then he opened her eyes to see a nearby well of water.

After this, Hagar raised Ishmael in the wilderness of Paran (Arabian desert; cf. Genesis 25:12-18). The last we hear of Hagar, she went to the idolatrous land of Egypt to get a wife for Ishmael (Genesis 21:21), which makes it doubtful she worshiped the LORD who had twice saved her and her son.

Read Genesis 16:1-6.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. Who was Hagar, and what transpired around her life (16:1-2)?

Reference: Note 1, *child by a maid*, p. 15.

Note: God later changed Abram’s name to Abraham, meaning *father of many*, and Sarai’s to Sarah, meaning *princess* (Genesis 17:15).

Note: Sarai probably bought Hagar when they were in Egypt (Genesis 12:10).

b. How did Hagar respond to her situation (16:4-6)?

2. a. Who came to Hagar's rescue, and what was his approach (16:7-8)?

Reference: Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

b. Upon her confession, what did the angel tell her to do (16:9)?

3. What promises did God give Hagar through the angel (16:10-12)?

4. What did Hagar declare about God in the name she gave Him, Beer Lahai Roi (16:13)?

5. As the angel predicted, what came about after Hagar's return (16:15)?

Read Genesis 21:1-21. Optional: Read Genesis 17:15-27.

6. a. What happened to Hagar when Ishmael mocked little Isaac (21:9-10)?

b. How did God reassure and direct Abraham (21:11-13)?

7. Both Abraham and Hagar had been promised by God that Ishmael would live to father a great nation. What circumstances made Hagar doubt this (21:15-16)?

8. What did God declare, promise, and provide (21:17b-19)?

9. a. Who helped Hagar raise Ishmael (21:20)?

b. What choice did Hagar make that showed she did not really worship God alone (21:21b)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

GOD'S WONDERFUL WAY OF UNDERSTANDING

We are all at different places in our spiritual pilgrimage. We may have believed in God for a long time, short time or somewhere in between. Perhaps some are only now exploring the possibility of a personal relationship with God. But regardless of where we are in our spiritual journey, it is very easy to feel God is distant from the present issues we face. We may assume our problem is not big enough for God to bother with or that He is not capable of handling it. Or we may think we are not important enough or good enough for God to help.

However, the Scriptures do not support such thinking. On the contrary, the Bible clearly proclaims God's infinite capacity to know, understand, and personally lead us through every issue of life.

Hagar was surprised, as most of us would have been, when the LORD appeared in the midst of her crisis. Yet while He does not often visibly appear, the Bible declares that God is always near, as close as the air we breathe. His infinite understanding transcends our own, and He has a way for us that we could not imagine or bring about ourselves.

As we begin our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, we will briefly examine these very comforting truths about God's wonderful way of understanding.

1. Think about Hagar's situation. How are we affected when we feel no one sees or understands our situation? How was Hagar's reaction typical?

2. What does the Bible declare:

about God's attention to you as an individual?

Psalm 139:1-4

about God's knowledge of your particular make up?

Psalm 139:13-14

about God's thoughts toward you?

Psalm 139:17-18

3. What do the following teach about God's understanding?

Jeremiah 10:12

I Chronicles 28:9b

4. a. What did Jesus promise about God's understanding of our needs in Matthew 6:31-32?

b. How are our needs met according to Matthew 6:33?

5. In His infinite understanding of all things, what is true of God's way?

Isaiah 55:8-9

Revelation 15:3

Psalm 18:30

6. a. According to Hosea 14:9b, what is the difference between the one who seeks God's guidance and the one who does not?

b. Which did Hagar seem to be? What can be seen about God's goodness here?

7. Hagar's story exemplifies the abundant provision of God available to us when we trust in His understanding and way for our lives. What is true of God's provision as we seek Him in the challenges of life?

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:32

Romans 8:38-39

SUMMARY

8. a. What have you observed in this lesson about God's (a) awareness and (b) understanding of your life and circumstances?

b. Hagar could not see the answer to her situation, but God had a way. Are you in a situation where you do not see the answer(s)?

c. From Hagar's story, what have you learned about God's way in your situation?

9. Remembering that He is near, perhaps you would like to take a moment and tell the LORD that you trust His understanding and way for you.

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *child by a maid*. "In the legal custom of that day a barren woman could give her maid to her husband as a wife, and the child born of that union was regarded as the first wife's child. If the husband said to the slave-wife's son, 'you are my son,' then he was the adopted son and heir. So Sarai's suggestion was unobjectionable according to the customs of that time. But God often repudiates social customs." Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 56.

2 **Reference:** Note 4, *YHWH*, p. 81.

LESSON 2

LOT'S WIFE

Abraham's nephew Lot and his wife had gathered their possessions and accompanied Abraham and Sarah as they heeded God's call to move to Canaan. But when both men became so wealthy that they had difficulty sharing the same area, Abraham gave Lot the choice of the land he wanted for his herds. Lot chose the rich land in the Jordan valley around Sodom, a notoriously wicked city (Genesis 13:5-13).

Originally Lot and his family were only sojourners in the area, but in time they became citizens of Sodom, taking in the way of life and values. Even so, the New Testament states that Lot was a "righteous man" whose soul was continually vexed by the lawless deeds of Sodom's people (2 Peter 2:7-8). But there is no indication that his wife or daughters felt the same.

Finally, the depravity in Sodom had become so evil that God sent two angels to judge the city and to help Lot's family escape the imminent doom. The evening the angels arrived in Sodom, Lot was at the city gate and insisted the angels stay at his home, probably fearing they would be raped if they stayed in the town square. But after dinner, all the men of the city surrounded Lot's home and demanded he send out the men to have sex with them. Lot begged the crowd to leave, then even offered his own daughters for sexual abuse instead!¹ The men outside became increasingly angry with Lot and finally moved to break the door down. With this, the angels pulled Lot inside and struck the men outside blind, telling Lot and his family they would have to leave the city immediately because God was about to completely destroy it.

No doubt this was a shocking and terrifying time for *Lot's wife*. It is hard to imagine the emotions she must have felt in this crisis. Lot had offered their daughters for abuse, and then the angels insisted they just walk away from their home and tremendous wealth. Finally, when Lot sent word to their daughters' fiancés about leaving, they thought he was joking.

As the dawn approached after a night of turmoil, the angels hurried the family out, even grabbing their hands to lead them to safety outside the city. Lot's wife had no choice but to follow. As they turned to go back, one of the angels commanded, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain!" Lot and his daughters obeyed, heading straight for the approved town. But Lot's wife followed behind her husband, who would not have seen her decision to disobey the angel. In the moment she looked back, Lot's wife became a part of the destruction of Sodom as she became a pillar of salt.

Jesus gives us a clearer understanding of the reason Lot's wife disobeyed God's command which the angel had communicated. In Luke 17, Jesus is recorded as warning against false security in worldly possessions, because such can keep people from following God's way of salvation from the judgment that will come. To emphasize this point, Jesus declared, "Remember Lot's wife!" (Luke 17:32).

She and Lot were wealthy (Genesis 13), and their possessions and possibly a certain status in Sodom seemed to have taken first place in her life. She looked back to see if they really had to leave it all. Her fate became a picture of what can happen when a person sets aside God and His way to embrace the values of the world. Her story is also a promise that God's protection and provision are found in trusting the LORD and His Word, especially as the culture around us moves further and further away from God.

In the end, we are told that Lot was saved because of the prayers of Abraham (Genesis 18:20-32; 19:29). Likewise, our prayers for others who are swept up in the world's ways may bring God's mercy on their lives as well.

Read Genesis 18:1-2, 20-32.

1. What was the purpose of the angels' visit to Sodom (18:20-21)?

Reference: Note 2, *"I will go down and see,"* p. 25.

2. a. Abraham immediately tried to save his nephew and family from the judgment coming to Sodom. What points did Abraham make in his plea to the LORD (18:23-25)?

b. What was the LORD's final promise to Abraham (18:32)?

Read Genesis 19:1-17.

3. How did Lot try to prevent the assault he knew would come to the angels (19:1-3)?

Reference: Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

4. Who came with intentions of raping the angels, and how did Lot try to stop them (19:4-8)?

Reference: Note 1, *Look, I have two daughters...*(19:8), p. 25.

5. What response to Lot did Lot's wife hear in this terrible crisis (19:9)?

6. The angels had seen enough. What events did Lot's wife experience in the hours that followed?

Genesis 19:10-11

Genesis 19:12-13

Genesis 19:14

Genesis 19:15

7. a. What did the angels do when Lot hesitated to leave (19:16)?

b. What was the angel's clear instruction before leaving them (19:17)?

8. What tragic mistake did Lot's wife make as she walked behind her husband (19:26)?

9. What saved Lot and his daughters (19:29)?

Note: "To 'remember' in the Bible is not merely to recall to mind; it is to express concern for someone, to act with loving care for him. When God remembers His people, He does so with favor." *NIV Study Bible*, p. 16.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

TAKING GOD SERIOUSLY

A little children's song goes:

"The B-I-B-L-E
Now that's the book for me!
I stand alone on the Word of God:
The B-I-B-L-E!"

Some would think, "That's not a song I want my child to sing. Such a belief is so narrow." Or perhaps, "My child can sing that song, but as an adult, I have a broader perspective."

If the historical facts about Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's wife tell us anything, it is that God keeps His word.

In a world of constant change, it is difficult to discern truth about the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of our being. Many institutes of higher learning teach that any absolute standards are "closed-minded," yet the human quest from birth is to learn the rules that will assure our prosperity.

The airplane pilot blinded by the storm must rely solely on the instrument panels to tell him how to keep the plane on course. When he relies on his own inclination, the plane will surely crash to the ground. Similarly, many have tried to see their way through the storms of life relying only on their own inclinations or those guidelines cleverly put forth by other human beings. They freely disregard their God-given conscience (Romans 2:15) and the principles put forth in the Bible as outdated or narrow. Others will not allow themselves to get "too close" to God's Word while they pick and choose from biblical principles depending on their convenience. Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's wife are a vivid picture of the "crash" that ultimately results from these dealings with God and His Word.

The wonderful news is that the Bible is reliable (see references at the end of this lesson). Its principles, warnings and promises were given to

us by God as sure guidelines for successful living in a complex world. Regardless of how one feels about the "instrument panel," history has proven its trustworthiness. God, while very patient (cf. 2 Peter 3:9), will always, in the end, fulfill His word completely. Sodom and Gomorrah remind us of His promise to finally destroy immorality and godlessness (cf. Romans 12:19), satisfying our natural human desire for the overthrow of evil.

Before she decided to follow God's direction through the angel, Lot's wife wanted to see if God really would destroy Sodom as He said He would. She learned too late that God's word is sure, and a sure foundation on which to stand.

As we continue our study on *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's take a closer look at the wisdom behind taking God seriously.

1. a. What might Lot's wife have been trusting when she failed to implicitly trust God's direction through the angel?

b. What might her actions tell us about her beliefs about God?

c. What are some factors that may keep us from taking God's word seriously?

2. What are some results in the world around us of disregarding what God has said to us through His Word:

socially?

emotionally?

physically?

in relationships?

3. Foolishness (scoffing at God and His word) and pride (self-exaltation) are the results of not taking God seriously. What does the Bible warn about foolishness and pride?

Ecclesiastes 10:3

Proverbs 16:18

4. How does Romans 1:28-32 describe the society that ignores God and godly principles?

5. What does the Bible promise the person who seeks to follow godly principles?

Proverbs 2:7-8

Note: *Blameless* refers to spiritual and moral integrity, not sinlessness.

Proverbs 2:9-11

6. What does the Bible claim about God's principles for life?

Psalm 19:7-11

7. Of what can we be certain regarding God's character that helps us choose to follow His guidelines?

Numbers 23:19a

Psalm 25:10

8. According to the following verses, what choices allow us to experience the rewards of taking God's word seriously?

Psalm 1:1-3

Proverbs 3:5-6

SUMMARY

9. What are the main truths you learned from the story of Lot's wife?

10. a. What are the rewards of taking God's word seriously?

b. What does the Bible promise about God that enables you to follow His wisdom instead of your own or that of the world?

11. Proverbs 3:6 says "In *all* your ways acknowledge Him..." which means no issue is too great or too small to pray about. Are there issues in your life today in which you want to commit to following God's way?

12. We can see from Abraham's intercession for Lot and his family that our prayers can be powerful in bringing God's mercy to others (Genesis 19:29). Is there someone you want to intercede for before God right now?

Suggested reading regarding the reliability of the Scriptures:

The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?, F. F. Bruce.

I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist,

Frank Turek and Norman Geisler.

Objections Answered, R. C. Sproul.

Inerrancy Answered, Norman Geisler.

God's Inerrant Word, John Warwick Montgomery.

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 *Look, I have two daughters (19:8)*. “How could any father give his daughters to be ravished by a mob of perverts, just to protect two strangers? Possibly Lot was scheming to save both the girls and the visitors, hoping the girls’ fiancés would rescue them or that the homosexual men would be disinterested in the girls and simply go away. Although it was the custom of the day to protect guests at any cost, this terrible suggestion reveals how deeply sin had been absorbed into Lot’s life. He had become hardened to evil acts in an evil city. Whatever Lot’s motives were, we see here an illustration of Sodom’s terrible wickedness—a wickedness so great that God had to destroy the entire city.” *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 38.

2 *“I will go down and see”* (Genesis 18:21). This is “not a denial of God’s infinite knowledge but a figurative way of stating that He does not act out of ignorance or on the basis of mere complaints.” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 33.

LESSON 3

RACHEL

Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90 years old when at last they had Isaac, the child of God's promise (Genesis 12:2; 17:2; 18:18). Isaac grew up and married Rebekah, and they had twins named Jacob and Esau. Although Esau was born only seconds before Jacob, he was considered the eldest and would receive a double inheritance as a birthright. But when they were grown, Jacob persuaded his brother to trade him the birthright for a pot of stew (25:29-34). Then his mother and Jacob schemed to deceive Isaac into giving Esau's blessing to Jacob as well (Genesis 27).

When Esau found out Jacob had deceitfully stolen his father's blessing, he declared he would kill Jacob as soon as their father died. Fearing for Jacob's life, Rebekah told her husband that Esau's Canaanite wives drove her crazy, and that Jacob must find a wife among her relatives at Haran, 400 miles northeast of Canaan. So Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him on the long journey.

En route to Mesopotamia, Jacob was surprised and awed as God met with him through a dream. He told Jacob that His covenant promise to Abraham would be carried on through Jacob's offspring. From this point on, Jacob knew and revered the God of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham.

No sooner had Jacob arrived in Haran than he saw his beautiful cousin *Rachel* at a well where she had come to water her father's sheep. When Jacob learned that she was the daughter of his Uncle Laban, his mother's brother, he fell in love instantly. He single-handedly moved

the heavy stone from the well, watered Laban's sheep, kissed Rachel's hand and wept. After staying a month in his uncle's home, Jacob promised Laban to work as a shepherd for seven years to have Rachel as His bride, "...but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her."

However, on the night of Jacob's agreed-upon wedding to Rachel, deceitful Laban substituted his older daughter, Leah, for the consummation. This was possible because the bride was taken to the bedchamber of her husband in silence and darkness. When daylight came, and Jacob discovered he had married Leah instead of Rachel, he was furious. Laban's weak explanation was that it was not the custom to give the youngest daughter until the oldest was married. He agreed to give Rachel to Jacob, too, after the usual bridal week for Leah was over, and in return for another seven years of work.

What a tragic turn of events for Jacob, Rachel and Leah! Jacob ended up with two wives, and to make matters worse, they were sisters! Rachel was forced to share the husband who loved her, and Leah had to live with being the unloved wife who was forced on Jacob. Because she was unloved, the LORD had compassion on Leah and gave her four sons (Genesis 29:31-35), while Rachel remained childless.

How did Rachel respond as she went through years of hearing the sounds of Leah's children? She became jealous of Leah and attacked Jacob, saying, "Give me children, or I'll die!" Jacob reminded her that God alone could give her children. Rather than trust God, however, Rachel turned to a custom of the day. She insisted that Jacob sleep with her maid Bilhah "so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family" (Genesis 30:3).¹

The children born to Bilhah were considered to be Rachel's, and we learn more about Rachel's response to her situation from the names she gave them. She named the first Dan, saying "God has vindicated me; He has listened to my plea and given me a son." Did she really think this was God's way of giving her a son? She named the second Naphtali, saying "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." Rachel's jealousy had led her into open competition with her sister over children. But when Leah followed Rachel's example and gave her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob, Zilpah had two sons.

One day, Reuben, Leah's firstborn, had brought her some mandrakes, a rare fruit superstitiously thought to induce pregnancy. Rachel told Leah that she would let Leah sleep with Jacob that night in exchange for some mandrakes. It appears Rachel had some control over Jacob and Leah's sexual relationship. Leah agreed, and, to her surprise, conceived another son. After that Leah had yet another son and daughter.

Finally, Rachel became pregnant and declared, "God has taken away my disgrace" (Genesis 30:23). Perhaps some faith in God had replaced envy in Rachel's life. We don't know, for she showed her continued discontent when she named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son" (30:24).

By this time, Jacob had worked for Laban 20 years, and the LORD informed him through a dream that it was time to return to his homeland. Rachel and Leah gave their full support; they had no attachment to such a devious and selfish father as Laban. Jacob devised a plan to leave without Laban's knowledge while he was away. While packing, Rachel stole her father's household gods.

When Laban returned home and discovered they had left, he went after them. He quickly caught up with the great, slow-moving company of Jacob (four wives, 12 children, plus many servants and vast herds). But God had warned Laban in a dream not to harm Jacob. Even so, Laban claimed everything Jacob had was really his and insisted on searching for the stolen gods. When they entered Rachel's tent to search, she sat on her camel's saddle in which she had hid the gods, and claimed she was having her period so they wouldn't search under her. Perhaps Rachel had looked to these gods to help her in her quest for children.

All during the journey back to his homeland, Jacob continued to grow in his devotion to God, who appeared to him again, changing his name to Israel (35:9-26). We don't know if Rachel drew close to God, too. We only know that on the way to Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel died giving birth to her second son, whom she named Ben-oni, meaning "son of my sorrow." Jacob renamed him Benjamin, "son of my right hand." Upon Rachel's death, Jacob (Israel) now had the twelve sons whose offspring would become the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

Perhaps God had been preserving Rachel's young life all along by keeping her from childbirth. Jacob, who had loved Rachel at first sight and to the end, set a large pillar over her grave. Many years later, when Jacob's family had settled in Egypt, Jacob recounted, "...to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan....And I buried her there in the way of Ephrath" (Genesis 48:7).

- Although Rachel only had two sons, the oldest, Joseph, was one of the most Christ-like heroes of the Old Testament. We can only wonder if Rachel at some point really began to trust God and encouraged Joseph in his pure devotion to the LORD.

Read Genesis 29:1-14a.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What amazing and unexpected events took place in young Rachel's life one day at the well near Haran?

Read Genesis 29:14b-30.

2. a. What terrible deception did Laban carry out?

b. What was Jacob's understandable response, and Laban's explanation and new deal?

Note: Jacob, who had been deceptive himself in getting his brother's birthright and blessing (27:36), had now ironically become the son-in-law of a master deceiver and married to Laban's firstborn daughter.

Read Genesis 29:31-30:13.

3. How might God have been protecting Rachel through her infertility (35:16-17)?

4. a. What destructive emotion did Rachel succumb to in the situation, and how did this affect her relationship with Jacob (30:1-2)?

b. What ungodly custom did Rachel's jealousy cause her to insist upon (30:3)?

5. a. What did Rachel's names for the sons of Bilhah tell about her motives? Where was her focus in having children (30:6, 8)?

b. What also resulted from her actions (30:9-13)?

Read Genesis 30:14-24.

6. What control had Rachel obviously taken over Jacob in the situation (30:14-16)? What does this reveal about Rachel's character at this point?

7. a. How did Rachel respond to her pregnancy (30:23)?

b. Where was her focus even as she named Joseph (30:24)?

Read Genesis 31:1-18.

8. a. After 20 years with Laban, the LORD told Jacob it was time to go home. Because of their selfish father, how did Rachel and Leah respond to the idea of this huge move (31:14-16)?

b. The LORD had given Jacob tremendous wealth during the last six years of work for Laban; his caravan would be enormous. Plus he had a very large family. Even so, what step of faith did Jacob take (31:17-18)?

Read Genesis 31:19-35.

9. What did these events reveal about Rachel's spiritual state?

Note: *Household gods* were small portable idols which Rachel may have thought would protect and bless her and give her something tangible to worship on the journey. Jacob later destroyed all such things (35:2).

Read Genesis 35:16-20.

10. How did Rachel's young life end, and how did her last words reflect the sorrow her obsession had caused her (35:18)?

Note: Ben-Oni means son of my trouble or sorrow.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

UNFADING INNER BEAUTY

Rachel was outwardly beautiful in face and figure, but her responses to life, which led her into greater and greater heartache, showed that in her heart she was unattractively self-absorbed. Scripture tells us that God does not look on the outward appearance, but on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Proverbs indicates why this is God's priority—it is the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23). Jesus said, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

We live in a society that does not place much emphasis on inner beauty. Yet the happiest, most fulfilled people are not necessarily the most beautiful or materially successful or the ones who get their way, but rather those who possess inner characteristics such as love, patience and unselfishness.

Many of our studies on various challenges of womanhood highlight character qualities we need for rich relationships with others and deep satisfaction in life. In this lesson, we'll look at the overall key to having any of these qualities that give a woman unfading inner beauty.

1. a. How would you describe a person with inner beauty?

b. How can outward beauty or success be a detriment to the development of inner beauty? How might this have been true of Rachel?

2. a. In today's society, what factors work against the development of inner beauty?

b. What are the results in our society?

3. What encourages the development of inner beauty? What have you seen in your own life?

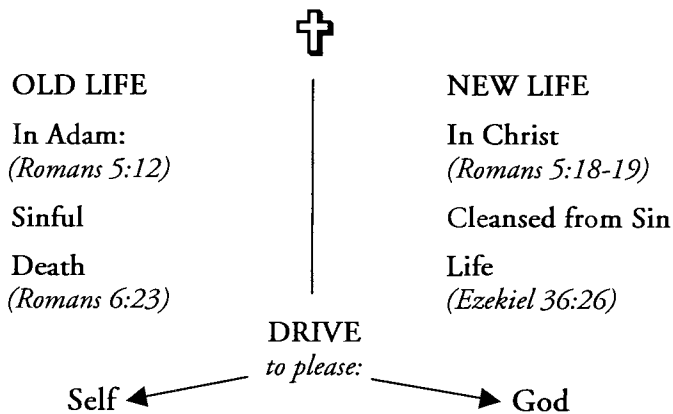
4. God alone can transform our hearts. Love for God and giving Him our heart is the way to true inner beauty. What happens when we receive Christ (John 1:12) that changes us on the inside?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

2 Corinthians 5:17

5. The following diagram may be helpful in explaining why we become a "new creation" when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that apart from Christ, we have inherited the fallen nature of Adam. This nature focuses on pleasing self. When we receive Christ,² the Bible says that spiritually we go through the death and resurrection of Christ and receive a new life spiritually. The old desire to please self is still with us, but the Spirit of Christ within gives us a powerful new desire and inner strength to please God.

Romans 6:4-7
II Corinthians 5:17



a. According to this diagram, what becomes a driving force when we invite Christ to come into our lives?

b. How is the inner beauty that pleases God, and that God's Spirit develops in us, described in the following passages?

Galatians 5:22-23

I Peter 3:3-4?

Note: A *quiet spirit* does not refer to a quiet personality, rather the inner quality of being at peace with oneself and God.

2 Timothy 1:7

6. a. How can the inner beauty that comes from loving God with all our heart and letting His Spirit³ govern our lives affect the world around us? (Think again about how this focus in Rachel's life would have affected her life and her relationships.)

b. What do the following suggest will result from loving God and letting His Spirit develop unfading inner beauty in our lives?

Matthew 5:14-16

Daniel 12:3

SUMMARY

7. Rachel's life illustrates the selfish nature that exists in all of us. What characteristics of Rachel do you want to avoid?

8. a. One of the most wonderful truths in the Bible is that the Spirit of Christ can dwell within us (John 14:16-17) and develop deep and lasting inner beauty.* What qualities of inner beauty do you most desire in your life?

b. What effects can inner beauty in your life have on your family and close relationships?

on people in general?

c. No matter how hopeless you might feel about it, what is God's promise to you as you choose to allow His Spirit to create inner beauty in you?

Psalm 37:4

*If you have never personally invited Jesus Christ to come into your life, take a moment to read Note 2, *Receive Christ*, on page 37. If this is the desire of your heart, the following is a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. I invite you to come into my life and make me the person you created me to be. Amen."

If you sincerely prayed this prayer, you can know on the basis of His promises that Christ is in your life and will never leave you.

Revelation 3:20

Hebrews 13:5

John 10:27-28

1 John 5:11-13

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 1, *child by a maid*, p. 15.

2 *Receive Christ*. “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). This is the promise that “all who welcome Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives are reborn spiritually, receiving new life from God. Through faith in Christ, this new birth changes us from the inside out—rearranging our attitudes, desires, and motives. Being born makes you physically alive and places you in your parents’ family (John 1:13). Being born of God makes you spiritually alive and puts you in God’s family (1:12). Have you asked Christ to make you a new person? This fresh start in life is available to all who believe in Christ.” *Life Application Bible, NIV*, p. 1869. References related to receiving Christ: Note 3, p. 146, Notes 2-3, *Justified, Redemption*, p. 225.

3 Reference: Note 1, *Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

LESSON 4

LEAH

As we saw last week, Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, had traveled over 400 miles northwest from his home in Canaan when he arrived at a well in Paddan Aram. He had gone to Mesopotamia to flee his brother Esau's wrath caused by Jacob's manipulation to take Esau's birthright and blessing. His parents, Isaac and Rebekah, also wanted Jacob to choose a wife from among his uncle Laban's family.

At the well, Jacob met his beautiful cousin, Rachel, and instantly fell in love with her. Laban (Jacob's mother's brother) also had an older daughter named *Leah*. She was homely in comparison to Rachel, because she had "weak eyes" (Genesis 29:17). We don't know what this meant, but somehow characteristics of her eyes made Leah unattractive.

Jacob's love for Rachel was clear to everyone, including Leah, when he offered seven years' work as a bride price to marry Rachel. Furthermore, these years "seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her" (Genesis 29:20). We don't know if Rachel felt the same about Jacob, but certainly Leah had no doubt about his feelings for her younger sister and lack of any romantic feeling toward her.

We can only imagine how Leah felt when after the wedding feast for Rachel and Jacob, Laban sent Leah in for the consummation. We don't know if Leah had a part in the deception, but the deceit was possible because by custom the bride was taken to the bedchamber of her husband in silence and darkness.

How did Leah feel as she gave herself to Jacob, knowing he thought she was Rachel, whom he adored and had worked seven years to marry? How she must have dreaded the morning light when he would realize he had married her instead of Rachel.

Sure enough, Jacob stormed from the wedding tent to confront Laban, who offered a lame excuse about it being customary to marry off an older daughter before the younger. Perhaps Jacob saw the deception as God's repayment to him for deceiving his blind and dying father in order to get his brother's blessing (Genesis 27). Even so, Jacob loved Rachel so much that he agreed to work another seven years in order to marry her at the end of the wedding week with Leah. And what was that week like for Leah?

One thing for sure, when her wedding week with Jacob was up, Leah's honeymoon was truly over. In addition to being unloved by Jacob, Leah was also faced with Rachel becoming more and more bitter, jealous, quarrelsome and hateful toward her. But the LORD took pity on Leah and began giving her sons. Things only got worse with Rachel as Leah had one baby boy after another and her sister remained barren. We see the control Rachel had taken over Jacob when one day Leah's oldest son, Reuben, brought his mother mandrakes, thought to magically induce pregnancy. When Rachel asked for some, Leah lost her temper. "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" Rachel agreed to let Leah sleep with Jacob that night in exchange for some mandrakes. Leah conceived and had another son, later another, and finally a daughter.

Even though Jacob didn't love Leah, the LORD made it up to her in giving her six sons and one daughter. Certainly they loved their mother and made her life full and active. It has been said that a boy never loves any woman more than his mother, and Leah had six to love her. The names she gave her sons also testify to her growing faith in the LORD. After Judah was born, she simply said, "This time I will praise the LORD" (29:35). It was from Judah's offspring that Jesus Christ would come nineteen hundred years later.

Polygamy—being married to more than one person—is not God's will for obvious reasons. But despite the polygamous marriage problems, Leah responded with faith, a sincere love for Jacob, and faithfulness to

him until he buried her in the cave of Machpelah alongside Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 49:31). Leah was a good wife and mother to Jacob's children, and seemed more fitted for the job of being the patriarch's wife than beautiful Rachel.

Read Genesis 29:14b-30.

1. a. What are we told about Leah (29:16-17)?

Note: As mentioned in the commentary, it is uncertain what *weak eyes* indicated except that somehow her eyes made Leah unattractive.

b. Despite the fact Leah was older and closer to his age, what did Jacob make perfectly clear and how (29:18-20)?

2. a. Briefly describe Leah's wedding night and how her marriage to Jacob began (29:22-28).

b. What situation was Leah indefinitely locked into (29:30)?

Read Genesis 29:31-30:13.

3. How did the LORD help Leah (29:31)?

4. What do you see about Leah's growing faith and gratitude toward God in the naming of her first four children (29:32, 33, 34, 35)?

5. a. Jacob would have done well to refuse Rachel's order to sleep with her maid (30:3-5), even though this was an accepted pagan custom. What did this lead Leah to do (30:9-13)?

b. Optional Question: Even though Rachel was jealous and competitive, what would have been a better response for Leah to demonstrate to her children (Romans 12:17-18, 21)?

Read Genesis 30:14-22.

6. What does the story of the mandrakes reveal about Leah's relationship with Jacob and her love for him (30:14-16)?

7. What brought about Leah's fifth pregnancy that night (30:17)?

8. After many years of rejection, how was Leah's devotion to Jacob reflected in the naming of her sixth son (30:19-20)?

Note: Even though unloved, Leah became the mother of half of Jacob's 12 sons who were the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. From Levi's line came the Aaronic priesthood, and from Judah's line came King David and his royal line, and ultimately Jesus Christ.

9. What final precious gift (probably really wanted by this time) did the LORD give Leah (30:21)?

Note: Thirty years later, when Jacob took his family to Egypt with 66 children and grandchildren, 33 were Leah's offspring, 16 were her maid, Zilpah's (Genesis 46:7-18). All 49 were considered Leah's.

To be sure Leah experienced heartaches. There was the rape of her daughter Dinah and the barbaric behavior of her sons at Shechem (Genesis 34). Later, Joseph disappeared and was thought dead (Genesis 37). Then the terrible famine came that caused their move to Egypt (Genesis 42f).

But in spite of the hardships, as age wore away the issue of beauty, Leah probably enjoyed the love and esteem of the large family God had given her and Jacob.

10. We don't know when Leah died, but she was buried in a place of honor. Where was Leah laid to rest (Genesis 49:29-31)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

RISING ABOVE REJECTION (AND OTHER PAINFUL SITUATIONS)

Living with an unloving husband and another wife whom he adores who is your own jealous sister is a hard scenario to imagine. In this context, however, Leah's life reflects some very important and comforting truths about how God can redeem painful situations in our lives. The Bible never promises that we will have no heartache in this world, but it does assure that a relationship with God can make the experience altogether different.

1. What are the negative emotions that can result from rejection, particularly from someone you love?

2. If not dealt with in constructive ways, what damage can these negative emotions bring about inwardly?

in our relationships with others?

3. a. What are some successful and unsuccessful ways Leah dealt with the rejection she faced?

b. What ultimately brought fulfillment to her life in spite of the rejection she endured?

4. a. While human love can be disappointing, how is God's love described?

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

b. How does I Samuel 16:7b contrast human perspective with God's?

5. Rejection usually involves criticism and withdrawal of attention. In contrast, what does the LORD give the believer in Christ?

Romans 8:1, 31

Psalm 121:3-4, 8

John 10:28

6. How do the following verses describe God's friendship?

Psalm 23:1-3

Psalm 34:18

John 15:13-14 (10:14-15)

7. a. What was the manifestation of God's love and compassion for Leah? How did He redeem her situation?

b. What does this tell us about God's concern when we face rejection and other painful situations?

c. Why is the LORD able to fully relate to our feelings in times of rejection?

Isaiah 53:3

Matthew 27:30-31

8. a. Leah's weakness and her situation were not limitations for God. How does God view our limitations according to Paul's declaration in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10?

b. As we walk with Him, how does God use heartaches for our best interest?

Romans 5:3-5

SUMMARY

9. What, if any, rejection have you experienced in the past or present that has been painful to you?

10. What are some unhealthy ways of dealing with the pain of rejection which you want to avoid?

11. In light of Leah's story, how can your relationship with God affect the experience of rejection in your life?

LESSON 5

DINAH

Having left Haran, Jacob's slow-moving caravan, consisting of his huge family, flocks, herds and numbers of servants, had traveled almost 400 miles from Mesopotamia back to Canaan where Jacob was born. They had stayed several years in Succoth, then finally crossed the Jordan River to camp near the city of Shechem in Canaan. There Jacob bought a piece of land and set up an altar he called El Bethel. Jacob's worship focused on the LORD's faithfulness to bring him back to his homeland as He had promised Jacob at that very place many years ago (Genesis 28:15).

Jacob had left home with nothing, but during his time in Haran, God had blessed Jacob with great wealth and a large family. He not only had the one wife he wanted, but four wives—Leah and Rachel and their maids, Bilhah and Zilpah—and twelve children.

In this great family, *Dinah* was Leah's seventh and last child and the only girl among, at this time, eleven brothers. She and Rachel's son, Joseph, were the youngest. It seems Dinah was beautiful, maybe resembling her Aunt Rachel more than her less attractive mother, Leah. Needless to say, this girl could easily have been pampered and spoiled, but we don't know this to be true.

Dinah was thirteen to fifteen years old, the marriageable age for that culture, when she decided to visit Shechem by herself. Probably bored in the camp with no girls her age, Dinah made the naïve mistake of going unaccompanied to the city. If she had heard the stories of the

danger her grandmother Rebekah and great-grandmother Sarah had faced in Egypt, she was disregarding their warnings as she went.

It so happened that Hamor, the area's ruler, had a son named Shechem (after the city), who took Dinah home and forced her to have sex with him. We don't know Dinah's part in this, but we are told Shechem loved her. He "spoke tenderly to her" and insisted that his father Hamor get her for his wife. Hamor immediately went to Jacob to tell of his son's love for Dinah. Then Shechem himself went to Jacob and Dinah's brothers offering to pay any bride price for Dinah.

Jacob seemed willing enough, but her brothers were "filled with grief and fury" (Genesis 34:7, 31). They led Hamor and Shechem to believe that Dinah would marry Shechem if all the men of the city of Shechem were circumcised¹ as Israelites were (Genesis 34:14-15, cf. 17:12). Hamor and his son Shechem, described as "the most honored of all his father's household," agreed to this. They persuaded the men of the city from a mercenary standpoint by saying, "Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us give our consent to them, and they will settle among us" (Genesis 34:23). All agreed and were circumcised.

But while the men of Shechem were in the third day of recovery after circumcision, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi attacked the defenseless city. They killed Hamor and Shechem, took Dinah from Shechem's home, killed all the other men, and plundered the city. Flocks, herds, children and wives were taken captive.

Jacob was so angry about the treachery and godless actions of Simeon and Levi that he didn't even forgive them on his deathbed (Genesis 49:5-7). "You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to...the people living in this land," he told them. And they responded, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

It is hard to imagine the scars these events left on Dinah's young life. After a woman was raped, she had no expectancy of having a valid marriage.² After these shocking events in Dinah's life, God told Jacob to go back to Bethel to settle and build an altar to the LORD. Before leaving, Jacob purged his family of anything connected with pagan idolatry and prepared them to worship God at Bethel. Perhaps through

this, Dinah, whose life had been forever altered by her careless actions, was drawn close to God and healed through her father's faith.

Read Genesis 33:18-34:12.

1. What was Jacob's first meeting with Shechem's family and the first thing Jacob did in Canaan (33:18-20)?

Note: As mentioned in the commentary, El Elohe Israel means *God is the God of Israel* or *mighty is the God of Israel*.

2. a. What did Dinah decide to do (34:1)?

b. What disaster resulted from her appearance in the city without an escort (34:2-4)?

3. While Jacob was composed about the situation, how did Dinah's brothers respond (34:5-7)?

Note: *disgraceful thing* or *folly* meaning shameful, vile, senseless deed that displays utter insensibility in moral behavior.

4. a. What was Hamor's appeal to Jacob and his sons (34:8-10)?

b. What did Hamor really seem to have in mind (34:23)?

5. What was Shechem's plea to Dinah's father and brothers (34:11-12)?

Read Genesis 34:13-31.

6. What did Dinah's brothers lead Hamor and Shechem to believe (34:13-18)?

Reference: Note 1, *Circumcision*, p. 54.

7. What action did Shechem and Hamor take (34:19-24)?

8. a. How did God's people act like cruel pagans (34:25-29)?

b. What was their expressed reason (34:31)?

9. What was Jacob's concern (34:30)?

10. In the midst of this concern, what next step did God give Jacob? What cleansing took place as a result of the disastrous events surrounding Dinah's poor choice (35:1-5)?

Note: Bethel was about 20 miles south of Shechem.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

TAKING GODLY PRINCIPLES SERIOUSLY

It is easy to imagine that if you can get away with breaking the rules, it must be okay to break them. To the contrary, the principles God gives in the Bible must always be taken seriously. The reason is that God's laws are designed to protect and reward us. As the Creator of the universe, God knows how He made His creation to work. He has given the Bible as a guidebook for healthy living. It also gives examples, like Dinah's story, of the disastrous consequences that come from disregarding godly principles for life.

Why should we heed the laws of Scripture? What warnings does the Bible give about disregarding godly principles? From Dinah's story, we can learn the answers to these and other questions related to taking godly principles seriously.

1. a. In spite of the frightening stories Dinah had most probably heard about her great grandmother Sarah and grandmother Rebekah in the hands of foreign kings, she went alone to Shechem. Where do you think Dinah went wrong?

b. What do the following verses suggest?

Proverbs 1:8

Proverbs 2:11

Proverbs 22:3

2.a. What godly principles did Shechem violate? What do these verses suggest?

Philippians 2:4

Titus 2:6

I Corinthians 6:18

b. How would he have known these principles?

Romans 2:15

3. What principles did Simeon and Levi violate?

Exodus 20:13

Leviticus 19:11

Romans 12:19

4. a. What were the results of these violations of godly principles?

b. Which of these violations and results do we see in our society today?

5. What warnings does the Bible give about disregarding godly principles?

Romans 2:8-9

Romans 3:16-17

6. What does God promise the one who takes godly principles seriously?

Romans 2:10

Deuteronomy 5:29

Matthew 7:24-25

7. While the natural consequences of our sin may continue, what does God promise when we forsake wrong ways to follow Him?

Isaiah 55:7

SUMMARY

8. What convictions about trusting biblical principles has this lesson stimulated for you?

9. What impact does living by biblical principles have on relationships?

10. What have you seen about imparting godly principles to children?

11. Why are godly principles so important to our society?

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 *Circumcision* was the cutting off of the foreskin, a practice which originated in various western Semitic cultures as a religious act. The Hebrew rite was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant between Himself and Abraham. God commanded Abraham and all his household to be circumcised (Genesis 17). The rite was required of every male Jew (descendant of Abraham) and any foreigner joining themselves to the Hebrew nation. This act assured the recipient of admittance to the fellowship of the covenant people and of a share in the promises of God to Israel. Circumcision metaphorically symbolized cutting away pride and sinfulness of the heart (Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Acts 7:51). Because circumcision predated the Laws of Moses, the heart attitude behind this act was first and foremost true faith in God.

2 Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 83.

LESSON 6

TAMAR

As we continue the story of the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—we recall that Rachel, the wife Jacob had loved, died giving birth to Benjamin. After her death, it became clear that her first son, Joseph, was Jacob’s favorite child. Jacob did not hide his special love for Joseph, who consequently became the object of great jealousy and disdain from his ten older brothers.

One day when he was just 17, Joseph’s brothers conspired to kill him. Reuben, who was the oldest and in charge, suggested they put him in a cistern (Reuben planned to come back later and save Joseph). Then Judah, Leah’s fourth son, suggested they sell Joseph to passing merchants who would vend him in the slave markets of Egypt. This would prevent them from shedding the innocent blood of their own brother. The brothers agreed and sold Joseph. When they got home, they led their father Jacob to believe wild animals had killed Joseph. The entire atmosphere of their home must have changed as Jacob fell into inconsolable grief over Joseph’s presumed death (Genesis 37).

After this, Judah left home to live in the Canaanite city of Adullam, about 15 miles northwest of Hebron. There, he married a Canaanite woman, and they had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Judah gave his first son in marriage to a Canaanite woman named *Tamar*. But the LORD put Er to death because he was wicked (38:7), leaving Tamar a widow and childless.

Now at that time a practice known as levirate marriage¹ had been established to preserve the line of the firstborn. This law required that

Judah's second son Onan marry Tamar to give her a child to carry on the name of Er. Onan took advantage of relations with Tamar, but "he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother" (38:9). This did not please God, and He put Onan to death for his wickedness, too.

With this, Judah told Tamar to go home to her father and promised he would send for her to marry their third son, Shelah, when he was old enough. But Judah was afraid if this son married Tamar, he would die, too, and determined he would never send for her.

After a long time, Judah's wife died, and when Tamar realized Shelah was of age and she was never going to be his wife, Tamar thought through a plan to force Judah to accept his responsibility by the levirate law. When he was away from home at Timnah for sheep-shearing, Tamar removed her garments of widowhood, put on a veil to hide her face, probably wrapped herself in a colorful and becoming robe, and posed as a religious prostitute.

Not recognizing her, Judah made advances. When Tamar asked what he would pay her, Judah promised a goat from home and agreed to leave his seal, its cord and his staff to assure he would return with the promised payment. Judah slept with Tamar, she conceived, then returned to her father's home. Later, when Judah took the goat to Timnah, people told him there had never been a religious prostitute there.

Three months later, Judah learned that Tamar was pregnant by prostitution. Tamar was still considered a part of his family, so Judah judged her as worthy of death. But when Tamar came before Judah holding his seal and cord and staff, Judah realized he was the father of the child. He confessed his wrong, saying, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah" (Genesis 38:26).

Tamar had twins! The firstborn, Perez, carried on the bloodline of Judah, from which would come the royal line of David and later the Lord Jesus Christ. Tamar is mentioned honorably in Ruth 4:12, in 1 Chronicles 2:3-4, and finally in Matthew 1:3 in the line of the Savior.

Read Genesis 38.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What unsettling events had taken place in Judah's family just prior to his leaving home (37:31-36; see also paragraph 2 of the lesson commentary)?

2. How did Judah build his own family among the Canaanites of Adullam (38:1-5)?

3. What hardship did Tamar experience after entering this family (38:6-10)?

Reference: Note 1, *Levirate marriage*, p. 62.

Note: *spilled his semen on the ground* is a method of birth control sometimes called "onanism" after Onan.

4. What was Judah thinking as he sent Tamar home to live with her parents (38:11)?

5. a. In time, Tamar realized Shelah was being withheld from her. How did she take action (38:12-14)?

b. How did Tamar succeed in preserving the bloodline of Judah (38:15-19)?

6. What was Judah told and what did he finally decide when he could not find the woman or get his things back (38:20-23)?

7. a. What did Judah's response to Tamar's pregnancy show about his character (38:24)?

b. How did Judah rectify his response when he saw the evidence (38:25-26)?

8. Tamar's actions preserved Judah's lineage as a tribe. She had twins, and the firstborn, Perez, became the head of the leading clan in Judah (later the southern kingdom in Israel) and the ancestor of King David and the great kings of Israel, and ultimately of Jesus Christ.

Tamar is mentioned honorably in Ruth 4:12 and 1 Chronicles 2:3-4. Where is she also mentioned?

Matthew 1:1-3

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

ABOUT JUDGING OTHERS

One of the most common characteristics of hypocrisy is harsh judgment of others. While conveniently overlooking our own shortcomings and God's mercy in our lives, we proceed to pass harsh judgments on others.

The story of Tamar exposes Judah's hypocrisy, as with incredible harshness he judged Tamar for a crime he himself had committed. Indeed, she was not even guilty of lustful action, and, in a sense, his breaking a promise and lack of integrity had compelled her conduct.

While it is easy to be appalled at Judah's actions, we must realize our own capacity for this type of hypocrisy. The duplicity and lack of mercy in Judah's initial judgment of Tamar magnify the ugliness of a critical and judgmental spirit. While critical thinking and careful scrutiny have their place in this world and can be constructive, the Bible encourages us to avoid judging others as much as possible. In this lesson, we will observe some biblical principles related to this very important topic.

1. a. Judah was born in the family privileged to know the LORD. Yet he had buried many crimes of his own so deeply that he thought nothing of passing a harsh judgment against Tamar, a woman from a pagan culture. What often happens when we are critical and judgmental of others?

b. What did Jesus humorously teach about this?

Matthew 7:3-5

2. a. What might have been Judah's real reasons for judging Tamar so harshly?

b. What does the Bible warn us about in Jeremiah 17:9 that can affect our judgments of others?

3. a. Why is God able to judge perfectly?

Jeremiah 17:10

b. In light of this, what are we encouraged to do?

Romans 14:10

I Corinthians 4:5

c. How did David do this with his enemies?

I Samuel 24:12

4. While we are not to set ourselves up to judge others, it is necessary to make judgments at times (example Matthew 7:6, 15-20). What do these biblical truths have to say regarding judgment of others?

Leviticus 19:15

2 Chronicles 19:7

5. What do these verses suggest about charitableness and the judgment of others?

Proverbs 17:9

Romans 15:1-2

Galatians 6:1

I Peter 4:8

6. a. Jesus warned against the habit of negative judgment and criticism of others. What principles did He teach?

Matthew 7:1-2

Note: "The present imperative suggests that it is the habit of judging others that is condemned. Though the word judge is itself neutral as to the verdict, the sense here indicates an unfavorable judgment." *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 940-941.

Luke 6:37-38

b. What does James 2:13 add to this?

SUMMARY

7. While it is easy to stand amazed at the hypocrisy of Judah, what can be learned from him about ourselves and judging others?

8. While critical thinking and judgment can be constructive, what is required for this to be so?

9. a. Is there a person, group or situation about which you tend to be habitually critical and judgmental?

b. What principles about judging others stand out regarding this case?

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *Levirate marriage* was an Israelite law (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line. The brother of the deceased husband or nearest of kin would marry the widow in order to carry on the line of the deceased. The children born were considered to be the children of the deceased husband, and the first-born child would carry on his name.

LESSON 7

JOCHEBED

Our next woman is *Jochebed*, the mother of Moses, who lived 300 years after Tamar, whom we just studied. But to understand Jochebed's story, we must begin where we left off in Genesis.

The drama at the end of Genesis around the life of Joseph is one of the most gripping stories of the Bible. Jacob had shown open favoritism to Joseph, and this caused jealousy and hatred to mount against him among the other brothers. One day when they were away from home with the flocks, they overpowered Joseph and sold him to passing merchants going to Egypt. Afterwards, they led their father to believe Joseph had been eaten by wild animals.

But God was with Joseph, and he gained tremendous favor with the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, who eventually made Joseph his prime minister in charge of the whole land. Later, when famine threatened to wipe out Jacob's entire family in Canaan, God had placed Joseph in a position to rescue them from extinction. He brought his father Jacob and family, seventy persons in all, out of Canaan and to the land of Goshen where he provided for them from the storehouses of Egypt. The book of Genesis closes with Abraham's offspring firmly planted in the land of Egypt.

After Joseph died, new kings who did not know Joseph, and therefore had no sympathy toward his people, ruled the nation of Egypt. They enslaved the Israelites and forced them to do hard labor to further build the Egyptian kingdom. Yet God blessed Abraham's descendants, multiplying their numbers until they were all over the land. They had

come to Egypt with 70 people, and now were in the millions. One translation of Exodus 1:7 reads, “Yet the Children of Israel bore fruit, they swarmed, they became many, they grew mighty in number—exceedingly, yes, exceedingly; the land filled up with them.”

Amazingly, God had foretold all of this two hundred years earlier when He said to Abraham, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:13,14). The deliverance foretold in this prophecy was the hope of faithful Israelites some 300 years later when Jochebed, Moses’ mother, was born into the tribe of Levi in Egypt.

Pharaoh feared the Israelites because of their massive multiplying population and decided to try to cut their numbers. At first, he instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill male babies. When this didn’t work, he decreed that all male babies be drowned in the Nile.

Jochebed and her husband, Amram, had a son age three (Exodus 7:7) and an older daughter when this shocking decree went out. She was pregnant again, and must have felt great tension as the day of delivery approached. Then, as Jochebed finally held Moses in her arms, there was an aura about him. She and Amram saw he was “no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict” (Hebrews 11:23). Instead of giving him up, Jochebed hid the baby for three months while she came up with a plan to save him.

Jochebed made Moses a little boat out of a papyrus basket coated with tar and pitch. She placed him in it and put it in the reeds out of the current of the Nile and in a place near where Pharaoh’s daughter came with her maids to bathe. Then Jochebed had Moses’ sister Miriam watch nearby. Sure enough, Pharaoh’s daughter found Moses and immediately decided to save this beautiful little boy. Miriam stepped up and offered to find an Israelite wet nurse, and Pharaoh’s daughter agreed.

Jochebed was no doubt nearby and came right away. Perhaps Pharaoh’s daughter could see through the whole scheme, but decidedly went along with it, hiring Jochebed to care for Moses until he was weaned,

and perhaps beyond. In that time of caring for Moses, Jochebed was able to pray for him and teach him about the God of Israel and His promises to His people. No doubt, Jochebed was chosen by God to be Moses' mother because of her courage and faithfulness.

The irony of this story is that even though Pharaoh had used violence and cruelty to weaken the Hebrew people, God simply used several women—the midwives, Jochebed and Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter—to raise up a deliverer for His people in Pharaoh's own household.

In spite of being an adopted prince in Pharaoh's palace, Moses maintained his bond to the Hebrew people. Eighty years after his birth, God used Jochebed's son to deliver His people from bondage, pass judgment on Egypt and its false gods, establish Israel as a nation and prepare them to enter the land He promised Abraham over six hundred years earlier.

Read Exodus 1:1-22.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. What had happened to the Hebrew people in the 300 years since Joseph and his generation had died (1:7)?

- b. What kind of task masters and what kind of labor did Pharaoh inflict on the multitude of Hebrew people out of fear they might turn on him (1:13-14)?

2. a. When the Israelites multiplied even more, how did Pharaoh resort to violence in his attempt to weaken them (1:15-17)?

b. As the Israelites became even more numerous, what decree went out from Pharaoh (1:22)?

3. a. How are we introduced to Jochebed (2:1-2)?

b. What does Hebrews 11:23 reveal about Moses' parents?

4. a. What plan did Jochebed devise to save Moses (2:3-4)?

b. Where did God lead Jochebed to place Moses (2:5)?

5. a. What was Pharaoh's daughter's response to this beautiful baby (2:6)?

b. What was Jochebed's daughter's courageous action (2:7)?

c. How was Jochebed's faithfulness rewarded (2:8-9)?

6. a. How completely did Jochabed have to put her son in God's hands (2:10)?

b. Eighty years later, God used Moses to deliver His people from Egypt and establish them as a nation ready to take the promised land of Canaan. Jochebed's son Aaron and daughter Miriam were godly leaders alongside Moses.

Although this poor slave woman may not have seen much of this happen, what does her life teach about faithfulness?

c. What qualities in Jochebed's life made her a capable mother for Moses, Israel's greatest leader?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

GETTING THROUGH HARD TIMES

The story of Jochebed and Moses is a picture of God's ability to redeem any situation. He used Pharaoh's evil decision to kill all Hebrew male babies to bring about the grooming of Israel's deliverer, Moses, under Pharaoh's own roof.

While we may at times doubt God's control in the world, the life of Moses reminds us that God is sovereign. While He allows man freedom of choice, in His omniscience He is able to work His plan of redemption around and through man's decisions. The Bible states that God is always working for the good of those who love Him.

Jochebed's life speaks loudly of the importance of remaining faithful and sensitive toward God in the midst of the most difficult moments of life. While it is easy to question God, worry or become bitter, we can see from Jochebed's experience that faithfulness channels energies in the right direction and, in the end, yields great benefits. Let's take a look at some biblical truths that give hope for the hard times we all experience.

1. What might Jochebed have been worried about during her pregnancy, in the first days of Moses' life, and through the years to come?

2. a. If Jochebed had let herself become consumed by worry, how might it have affected her and her family? What negative results come from worry?

b. What positive results came when Jochebed put aside her worries and trusted God?

3. What do the following suggest can help us overcome worry?

Psalm 62:8

Philippians 4:6-7

Philippians 4:8

4. a. Jochebed clung to God's promises. What had God promised her ancestor Abraham almost six hundred years earlier?

Genesis 15:13-14

b. What did the fulfillment of these promises show about God's sovereign work throughout history, both then and today?

5. The Bible illustrates again and again that while God has sovereignly given man freedom of choice, God uses man's decisions, good and bad, to work out a redeeming plan for mankind. What can we know about God's sovereign work in history and in our lives as we trust Him?

2 Chronicles 16:9a

Job 42:2

6. What happens when we call on the LORD for help in difficult times?

Psalms 18:3, 31-36

Psalms 32:8

7. What does the LORD promise, regardless of how difficult the situation appears?

Zephaniah 3:17

Isaiah 43:2

Isaiah 43:18-19

Isaiah 45:2-3

8. Jochebed did her best in the situation, acknowledged God's sovereignty and remained faithful. After we have done our best, what brings us rest in difficult times?

Isaiah 40:31

I Peter 5:7

SUMMARY

9. a. Do you struggle with habitual worry, or is there a circumstance in your life at this time that pulls you toward incessant worry?

b. What has this study around Jochebed's experience shown you about overcoming worry?

c. What positive action can you take in your situation?

10. As you make the choice to continually trust the LORD, what has He promised you regarding your situation?

11. What can you know about God's sovereign work in our world?

LESSON 8

DEBORAH

Deborah was perhaps the strongest woman leader recorded in the Bible, living some 200 years after the time of Moses and Joshua. To understand her role in Israel's history, we need to trace Israel's steps after Moses and Joshua into the three hundred year period of the judges.

Moses was used by God to deliver as many as five million Israelites out of Egyptian bondage and establish them as a nation ready to enter the land God promised Abraham almost 700 years earlier (Genesis 15:13-14). After Moses died, Joshua led God's people in the miraculous conquest of Canaan documented in the Book of Joshua.

But the Israelites did not finish the job of taking the land. Disregarding God's warnings through Moses and Joshua, they intermingled and lived among Canaanites and Philistines who worshiped idols like Baal and Asherah and Ashtoreth.¹ Religious prostitution and horrible child sacrifice were involved in appeasing these gods that God had strictly forbidden them to worship. Finally, at Bokim, the angel of the LORD told Israel that God would no longer give them the power to drive out these people; from now on, "they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you" (Judges 2:3).

Joshua and his generation died, and the people quickly forgot the acts of God that had made them a nation. They became more and more dedicated to Canaanite peoples, morals, gods, and religious beliefs and practices. With this, the repetitive cycle we see throughout the Book of Judges began. As they lapsed into idol worship, God would chasten

them by withdrawing His supernatural protection and allowing a foreign enemy to invade and occupy the land. In those barbaric times with its ruthless rulers, this would mean terrible oppression. The people of Israel would then repent and cry out to God, who graciously raised up leaders, called judges, to help them throw off the foreign oppressor and restore peace in the land.

The twelve judges³ recorded in the Book of Judges were not courtroom judges as we know today. They were mostly charismatic leaders endowed by the Holy Spirit with supernatural wisdom or strength to be Israel's "saviors." They were principally military deliverers, raised up to save the people of Israel from an oppressing nation during the 300 year period of the judges.

Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was the fourth judge and leader in Israel. She was loved and respected by men and women alike for her wise counsel and mediation dispensed under a tree known as the Palm of Deborah in the hill country of Ephraim. Deborah was also a prophetess whom God used to speak to Israel. In all these tasks, she gave herself completely to being "a mother" to her people (Judges 5:7).

In Deborah's time, Israel's unfaithfulness and evil idolatrous practices had led to twenty years of severely oppressive rule by Jabin, a Canaanite king, and his commander, Sisera. His army had 900 iron chariots, making Sisera impossible to defeat.

Deborah had yearned for Israel's freedom for years when the LORD finally spoke to her and told her He had heard the people's cries and was going to free them from Jabin's cruel dominance.

Deborah sent for Barak to give him the LORD's order that he assemble 10,000 Israelite men from Zebulun and Naphtali in the hill country and go to Mount Tabor. From there, they would advance against the feared chariots and vast army of Sisera. Barak told Deborah he would only go if she went with him, so Deborah accompanied Barak with his men to Mount Tabor.

Seeing this move on Israel's part, Sisera immediately assembled his army to wipe out the small Israeli uprising. Things had to have been

tense as Barak's troops were poised to advance by faith against a massive force that would run them down apart from God's help.

Then, Deborah declared God's word to them: "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" As Barak proceeded down the mountain with his army, a cloudburst upstream caused the Kishon River in the valley to overflow onto the plains where it immobilized the Canaanite chariots (Judges 4:15; 5:20-22). Sisera and his army fled on foot as Barak's army pursued them. Not a man in Jabin's army survived as "the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword." Finally, as Deborah had prophesied, a Kenite woman named Jael killed General Sisera who had sought refuge in her tent (Judges 4:11, 17-22).

After this God-given victory that Deborah orchestrated, Israel grew stronger and stronger until they destroyed Jabin. Her dream of restored freedom and peace came as Israel experienced a 40-year rest from oppression (Judges 5:31).

Read Judges 2:11-19.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. What continually led the people of Israel into oppressive captivity by foreign kings during the period of the judges (Judges 2:11-13)?

Reference: Note 1, *Baal and Ashtoreth*, p. 80.

b. How did God respond to the evil practices of His people (2:14-15)?

Reference: Note 3, *Judges*, p. 81.

2. a. In His compassion, what did the LORD (YHWH) do to help Israel (2:16, 18)?

Reference: Note 4, *YHWH*, p. 81.

b. What was the sad response of the people (2:17, 19)?

Read Judges 4:1-24.

3. What was the condition of Israel at the time of Deborah (4:1-3)?

Note: Deborah lived around 1209-1169 B.C., some 200 years into the 300 year time period of the judges.

4. How did Deborah serve her people (4:4-5)?

5. a. What instruction did the LORD give to Deborah that she gave to Barak when he came (4:6 -7)?

b. Barak's need for Deborah at his side showed a lack of faith in God. What did Deborah prophecy that he would forfeit (4:8-9)?

c. What act of courage on the part of a Kenite woman named Jael fulfilled this prophecy (4:21-22)?

6. Summarize how Deborah's prophecy regarding the battle was fulfilled.

Judges 4:9c-10, 12-13

Judges 4:14-16

7. a. What happened as a result (4:23; 5:31c)?

b. What was Deborah's prayer as she ended her victory song (5:31a-b)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE

There is no more noble occupation a woman can be involved in than helping others succeed; and to help others succeed, she must be a positive motivator. Whether it be with family, friends, neighbors or

business associates, the woman who is a positive motivator of the people around her will experience tremendous fulfillment.

Deborah knew how to bring out the best in people. Her influence was so strong that God was able to use her to draw all of Israel back to faith in God and reestablish them as a nation. The qualities that enabled Deborah to be a positive motivator of people are qualities we can possess as well.

As we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, we will look at some of the keys to bringing out the best in people.

1. From what you have read about Deborah, what do you think made her a positive motivator of Barak and the Israelites?

2. Think of the people who have brought out the best in you or motivated you to reach your potential. What characteristics or actions influenced you positively?

3. What inner qualities described in these verses are essential to being a positive motivator?

I Timothy 1:5

Matthew 20:25-28 (23:11-12)

4. a. What does the positive motivator have to be able to do?

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Acts 20:35

b. What is God's promise when we are others-centered?

Proverbs 11:25

Luke 6:38

5. a. Deborah possessed certain mindsets that made people trust her. What trust-producing qualities mentioned in the following passages were exhibited in Deborah's character?

Joshua 1:7, 9

Mark 12:30-31

I Peter 5:2-3

b. Why do these qualities generate trust in a leader?

6. Where was Deborah's source of direction and strength as she sought to help Israel succeed?

Psalm 25:9

Jeremiah 33:3

7. Communication is integral to positive motivation. What do the following suggest about speaking and listening?

Ephesians 4:29

James 1:19

8. Deborah set high standards of excellence for those she sought to motivate. From where did she get her standards for excellence?

Deuteronomy 32:3-4

9. As we seek to bring out the best in people, what is the ultimate positive influence we should seek to have, according to the following?

Colossians 1:9-10

SUMMARY

10. What do you admire about Deborah that you want most in your life?

11. What do you consider to be the most important qualities you can develop and maintain in order to bring out the best in people around you?

12. a. What would you like to see happen in the lives of the people closest to you as a result of your influence?

b. Perhaps you would like to take a moment to talk to the LORD about these desires.

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 *Baal and Ashtoreth, Asherah.* *Baal* means “lord.” He was “the god worshiped by the Canaanites and Phoenicians, was variously known to them as the son of Dagon and the son of El. In Aram (Syria) he was called Hadad and in Babylonia Adad. Believed to give fertility to the womb and life-giving rain to the soil, he is pictured as standing on a bull, a popular symbol of fertility and strength. The storm cloud was his chariot, thunder his voice, and lightning his spear and arrows. The worship of Baal involved sacred prostitution and sometimes even child sacrifice (Ex.: Jeremiah 19:5).

Ashtoreths are female deities such as Ashtoreth (consort of Baal) and Asherah (consort of El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon). Ashtoreth was associated with the evening star and was the beautiful

goddess of war and fertility. She was worshiped as Ishtar in Babylonia and as Athtart in Aram. To the Greeks she was Astarte or Aphrodite, and to the Romans, Venus. Worship of the Ashtoreths involved extremely lascivious practices (Ex: 1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 23:7)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 332.

2 Reference: Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

3 *Judges* "describes the leaders in Israel from the time of the elders who outlived Joshua until the time of the monarchy. Their principal purpose is best expressed in 2:16: 'Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of . . . raiders.' Since it was God who permitted the oppressions and raised up deliverers, He himself was Israel's ultimate Judge and Deliverer (11:27; see 8:23, where Gideon, a judge, insists that the LORD is Israel's true ruler)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 325.

There were six major judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson) and six minor ones (Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon). Samuel is sometimes called the last judge and first prophet (cf. 1 Sam. 7:6,15-17; 3:20; Acts 3:24; 13:20).

4 *YHWH* pronounced "Yahweh." In this Bible study, LORD translates God's personal name, YHWH. Surrounding nations knew this name for Israel's God.

I AM WHO I AM or *I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE* is the name by which God wished to be known and worshipped in Israel--the name that expressed his character as the dependable and faithful God who desires the full trust of his people (see Exodus 3:12, where "I will be" is completed by "with you"; see also Exodus 34:5-7).

In Exodus 3:15 God told Moses to say to the sons of Israel that "YHWH, the God of your fathers... sent you." YHWH is the third person form of the same verb, *to be*, and means *He is* or *He will be* which is the form of the verb used when *we* speak of God. (i.e. God says, "I AM," and we say, "He is.")

While correct pronunciation of the Hebrew word YHWH has been lost, "Jehovah" is an incorrect spelling that developed from combining the consonants of the name with the vowels of a word for "Lord" (Adonai). "Yahweh" is probably the original pronunciation. The name eventually ceased to be pronounced because later Jews thought it too holy to be uttered and feared violating Exodus 20:7 and Leviticus 24:16. It is translated LORD in the NIV translation. *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 91, 279.

LESSON 9

DELILAH

The moral deterioration in Israel that resulted from years of intermarrying and idolatry with the foreigners in their midst is apparent in the story of Samson. Because of the Nazirite¹ vow his parents had taken for him before he was born, and because of the incredible strength God gave Samson, he was considered a leader, or judge, in Israel.

Samson was strong enough to kill a lion barehanded, break new rope “like threads,” or kill 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. With this strength, he had single-handedly attacked and viciously slaughtered many Philistines, and they hated him.

While Samson was able to control the outcome of a battle, he was unable to control his passion for the wrong women. Over the years, he had first married a Philistine who was killed by her people to get back at Samson (Judges 15:1-6). Then Samson spent the night with a prostitute in the Philistine seaport of Gaza (Judges 16:1-3). Some time later, he fell in love with a woman named *Delilah*. She is assumed to have been Philistine and perhaps a prostitute. Samson either moved in with her or spent a lot of time at her home.

Delilah is a beautiful name that means “delicate” or “dainty one.” But this Delilah was anything but dainty. The Philistine rulers bribed her with an enormous amount of money to find the source of Samson’s strength so they could capture him, and she heartlessly set out to bring Samson down. Her shrewd actions set Delilah apart as one of the lowest and meanest women in Scripture.

With sweetness and feminine charm, Delilah pretended to love Samson. Blinded by his weakness for a seductive woman, he was totally oblivious to her deceitful efforts to betray him. She spoke in jest to find the secret of his strength, flattering him to believe no man could bind him. "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued," she pleaded. Going along with what he saw to be a little game, he first answered that fresh bowstrings could bind him. With Philistine men hiding in the room, she thus bound Samson, who jokingly and effortlessly snapped the strings.

This game continued with Delilah begging him to tell her how he could possibly be weakened, Samson making up something, the Philistine leaders hiding in the room, and the technique failing. Finally the deal was off, the Philistines left, and Delilah was probably angry and even more determined to succeed.

She decided to use nagging about his lack of love and trust in her. "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me?" With this pleading day after day, Samson gave in. Whether his heart was melted or he just couldn't stand the nagging any longer, he told her about the Nazirite vow and how if his hair were cut off, his strength would depart.

Confident she had the truth this time, Delilah immediately called the Philistine leaders back, and as Samson slept in her lap, his hair was cut. Then she called out one last time, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" Samson awoke to find the "LORD had left him" (16:20). The Philistine men seized him, gouged out his eyes, and took him to Gaza where they bound him with fetters and made him grind corn in the prison. Possibly during this time, Samson repented and cried out to the LORD to forgive him. All the while, no one noticed that his hair was growing.

The leaders decided to hold a huge celebration in honor of their god Dagon, whom they praised for delivering Samson into their hands. Thousands attended, including all the Philistine leaders and most likely Delilah as an honored guest.

When they brought Samson out for entertainment, three thousand watched from the building's upper level alone. Samson had the servant

guiding him place him between the pillars that supported the temple and prayed for God to strengthen him one last time. The LORD answered, and to everyone's shock, Samson pushed the enormous pillars apart, bringing the temple down on the rulers and all the people and himself.

Samson led Israel twenty years before his death, and we will never know what different story could have been told had he married an Israelite as God commanded. He was a giant in physical strength, but small and weak when it came to willpower and moral resistance. Sadly, stepping out of God's will hurt both Samson and his people and destroyed his effectiveness as God's man.

Delilah stands as an ugly picture of our potential as women to be greedy, self-centered, heartless and deceitful, stooping to bring down someone else for revenge or money. She played the classic part of a woman pretending to be in love with a man, using him, then dropping him. Perhaps she was the person the writer of Proverbs spoke of when he said, "for the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword" (Proverbs 5:3-4).

Delilah's life was a sad waste of the beauty and intelligence God had given her. But her evil and Samson's weakness did not stop the glory of God from being revealed. Their actions actually led to YHWH's exposure of Dagon at the celebration where that false god was to be exalted. Through the strength the LORD gave Samson, Dagon's people were destroyed, Dagon proved powerless, and Israel's God true.

Read Selected Passages in the Book of Judges.

Optional: Read Judges 13-15.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. How was Samson unique from birth (Judges 13:2-5)?

References: Note 1, *Nazirite*, p. 91, and Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

2. a. What had God commanded Israel not to do so that they would not be pulled into the horrors of pagan idolatry?

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 (1-6)

Reference: Note 1, *Baal and Ashtoreth*, p. 80.

b. Although God had enabled Samson to kill many Philistines, earning their fear and disdain, how was he unfaithful to God?

Judges 14:1-3

Optional: Read the narrative of Judges 14 and 15.

c. What did the Philistines finally do because of their anger toward Samson (Judges 15:6b)?

3. What did Samson do that made the Philistines fear and hate him even more (Judges 15:13-15, 20)?

Read Judges 16:1-22.

4. God had given Samson supernatural strength to protect Israel from the Philistines. How was Samson again unfaithful (16:1, 4)?

Reference: Note 2, *Samson typifies the nation of Israel*, p. 91.

5. How did the Philistine leaders exploit this weakness? What did they propose to Delilah (16:5)?

Note: They each were offering 28 pounds of silver, altogether a huge amount of money. Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.

6. Delilah set out to learn the secret of Samson's strength through a seemingly insignificant teasing game. You may underline her questions and Samson's answers in your Bible to see this. The following is a basic chart of her appeals, his answers, and the result as Samson played along (16:6-14).

<u><i>Delilah's Questions</i></u>	<u><i>Samson's Answer</i></u>	<u><i>Result</i></u>
Tell me the secret of your strength and how you can be tied and subdued?	Fresh bowstrings.	Snapped them.
Come now, tell me how you can be tied.	New ropes.	Snapped them.
Tell me how you can be tied.	Braids of my hair woven into fabric.	Pulled apart everything.

a. What final manipulation did Delilah use to try to get Samson to tell her how she could break his strength (16:15-16)?

b. What secret information did he entrust to Delilah (16:17)?

7. What did Delilah's deceit bring about for Samson (16:21)?

Read Judges 16:23-31.

8. What did the thousands of Philistines gather to celebrate (16:23-24)?

9. How was the LORD's name exalted in the outcome of the party (16:26-30)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

DECIDING AGAINST DECEIT

For whatever reason, Delilah practiced gross deceit, making things appear differently than they really were. While pretending to desperately love Samson and want security in his love, Delilah doggedly pursued Samson's ruin. While in the short run she achieved her objectives, her deceitful actions led to disaster.

We live in a society where even legal documents can be purposefully deceptive and where dishonesty oftentimes seems the only means to success in the workplace. In such an environment, it is increasingly difficult to practice honesty.

But the Bible warns that God has created His world to reward honesty and be intolerant of dishonesty. History proves that honesty is the best policy and that truth endures. As with Delilah, deceit leads only to destructive outcomes; deceit never ultimately benefits the deceitful person.

As we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's look at some biblical principles that encourage us to decide firmly and consistently against deceit.

1. a. What did the final outcome of Delilah's deceitfulness demonstrate about the results of dishonesty?

b. What destructive results of deceptive practices do you see around you in the world today?

2. What are motives for dishonesty?

3. What do the following say regarding the outcome of deceitfulness?

Proverbs 20:17

Proverbs 21:6

Isaiah 59:8

4. a. Summarize the LORD's commands regarding honesty.

Leviticus 19:11-13a

Leviticus 19:15, 35-36

Zechariah 8:16

b. What does the LORD reveal about His nature regarding honesty in the following?

Psalm 5:6

Psalm 101:7 (cf. Psalm 15)

5. What motivations for practicing honesty are found in the following?

Proverbs 11:3

Proverbs 12:22

Proverbs 20:7

Note: *blameless* refers to spiritual and moral integrity, not sinlessness.

6. a. What can we do to rectify dishonest actions?

Matthew 5:23-24

Leviticus 6:1-5

b. In the Old Testament times, an offering was made to God in order to rectify an action of dishonesty (Leviticus 6:5-6). Today, how are we made right with God because of the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

Romans 3:22-25a

I John 1:9

7. What strength is available to us as we seek to decide against deceit?

Ephesians 3:16, 20

Ephesians 6:10,14

Reference: Note 1, *Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

SUMMARY

8. a. Are there any areas in which you are tempted to be deceitful with yourself and others?

b. Why is it helpful for you to know biblical perspectives on honesty? What biblical truths motivate you to decide against dishonesty?

9. a. Are there any situations in which you feel a need to make restitution to someone for dishonesty and ask forgiveness of the LORD?

b. What would be the greatest outcome of such decisions?

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 *Nazirite* refers to a Jew who took the ascetic vow described in Numbers 6:1-21. The term "nazirite" comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* meaning "consecrated" or "separated." This vow required the man or woman to: 1) Abstain from wine, vinegar, grapes, raisins, and according to some—alcohol and alcohol vinegar. 2) Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head. 3) Avoid corpses and graves, even of family members, and any structure which contains such. Nazirite vows were usually temporary, but the Bible tells of three who were perpetual Nazirites from birth: Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist. The angel of the LORD instructed Samson's mother that he should be a Nazirite before he was born that he might deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines (13:5).

2 *Samson* "*typifies the nation of Israel*—born by special divine provision, consecrated to the LORD from birth and endowed with unique power among his fellowmen. The likeness is even more remarkable in light of his foolish chasing of foreign women, some of ill repute, until he was cleverly subdued by one of them. In this he exemplified Israel, who during the period of the judges constantly prostituted herself to Canaanite gods to her own destruction." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 350.

LESSON 10

NAOMI

The three hundred year period of the judges was the dark ages of Israel's history. The conquest of the Promised Land had been followed by periods of spiritual decline with brief periods of revival. The spiritual apostasy increased with time until the end of the Book of Judges records corruption and bloody civil strife.

The Book of Ruth, like a diamond on black velvet, is a story of romance and redemption set against the dark backdrop of the time of the judges in Israel. Ruth, a young Moabite widow, journeyed to Bethlehem with her widowed mother-in-law, *Naomi*. She left her homeland of Moab with its idols, and gave herself completely to helping Naomi and worshiping the God of Israel. Because of her faithfulness and kindness, God rewarded Ruth by giving her a new husband, a son and a privileged position in the ancestral line of David and Christ.

The story begins describing the tremendous grief Naomi experienced after her husband Elimelech took the family to the foreign land of Moab to escape famine in Bethlehem. In Moab, her husband died, her two sons married Moabite women, then both sons died. She and the two widows were left destitute.

Either because the daughters-in-law were still considered part of their husbands' family or because Naomi was so loved by Orpah and Ruth, they both started out with Naomi to go back to Bethlehem where there was food again. En route, however, Naomi realized marriage for Ruth

and Orpah as Moabites in Judah would be near impossible. She insisted the girls return to their homeland where they could marry again. Orpah finally followed Naomi's plea that they return to their families. However, Ruth refused. So committed was she to Naomi that she insisted, "Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried" (Ruth 1:16-17). Naomi could not resist Ruth's determination, so they traveled on together.

The arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem caused quite a stir as everyone observed how Naomi's great hardship and sorrow had aged her. Naomi was also in a state of depression, and told them God had left her empty and made her life bitter.

Naomi probably watched in amazement as Ruth refused to be defeated by their impoverished situation. In her love and devotion to Naomi and her trust in God, Ruth worked hard gleaning the fields of the barley harvest of a relative named Boaz. This gracious man did all he could to help Ruth, and Naomi began to see God's hand at work.

At the end of the harvest, Naomi instructed Ruth to lay at the feet of Boaz, thus proposing levirate marriage¹ to him. Boaz was astounded by the inner beauty of a woman who would serve her mother-in-law so humbly and be willing to marry an older man to redeem Naomi's family. He took steps that day to marry Ruth and redeem the family, as the elders of the city rejoiced and blessed their union.

God's faithfulness and the work of His providence was further emphasized at the end of the book as Naomi held her grandson on her lap. Ruth and Boaz's son Obed would continue Naomi's husband's bloodline, which would lead to King David and ultimately the Redeemer of all, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Ruth 1:1-18.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What caused Naomi's circumstances to change dramatically (1:1-2)?

2. What happened in Naomi's life over the next ten years in Moab (1:3-5)?

3. a. When Naomi heard there was food in Bethlehem again, she and Ruth and Orpah left their home in Moab and set out on the road to Judah. What did Naomi decide on the way (1:8-9a)?

b. How did Ruth and Orpah respond (1:9b-10)?

4. a. What was Naomi's basic argument (1:11-13)?

b. Why was it more bitter for Naomi than for Ruth and Orpah?

5. How did the women respond (1:14, 18)? (Lesson 12 on Ruth will address her response more specifically.)

Read Ruth 1:19-22.

6. What did the women's response to Naomi's return tell you about the physical toll the ten years in Moab had taken on her (1:19)?

7. Naomi's name means "my joy," "my bliss," or "pleasantness of Jehovah." If Naomi had once been joyful and agreeable as her name suggests, how had the tragic losses in Moab left her feeling (1:20-21)?

Read Ruth 1:22-2:12 and selected passages.

8. How did God begin to rebuild Naomi's life in her time of grief?

9. a. What happened with Ruth and Boaz' relationship that saved Naomi from poverty and preserved the bloodline of her husband (4:9-10, 13)?

Reference: Note 1, *Levirite marriage*, p. 99.

b. For what did the women praise the LORD (4:14-15)?

10. a. What was Naomi's great joy (4:16)?

b. Why was Naomi's grandson Obed an especially important and privileged child (4:17 and Matthew 1:1, 5-6)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

NEW STARTS

Naomi left behind the homeland she loved, then lost the husband she loved. Ten years later, she lost her beloved sons, and with them, she lost her livelihood. Forced but probably glad to move back to her ancestral Israel, Naomi felt she had to also say good-bye to her beloved daughters-in-law with whom she had shared so much heartache. She knew she could not support them and encouraged them to return to their families.

In reading her dilemma, one can easily understand and feel the fatigue Naomi faced physically, emotionally and spiritually. But if we were to meet her today and ask what she learned about starting over, no doubt Naomi would offer words of great encouragement and hope. While Naomi would certainly not deny the emotional pain and spiritual confusion that can come at such times, she would declare God's ability and faithfulness to get one to higher ground.

We all face new starts in life—exhausting ones like Naomi's, along with many little transitions through the years. From Naomi's story we can glean some encouraging insights to help us through the losses, changes and new beginnings in life.

1. What difficulties might Naomi have experienced as she faced a new start in life?

2. Why is it hard to start over when we have given time and energy to things past? What feelings are involved?

3. According to Psalm 139:7-12, where is the LORD at these times?

4. What do the following suggest that the LORD desires to do for us when we face new starts in life?

Isaiah 30:18, 21

Isaiah 40:11

Isaiah 41:10

5. What are we encouraged to do in times of uncertainty and change?

Philippians 4:6

James 1:5

I Peter 5:7

Isaiah 43:18-19

6. What can we be sure about when we are overwhelmed with the tasks or situation at hand?

Isaiah 42:16

Isaiah 45:2-3

7. If Naomi were here, she would probably tell us not to fear the future. What did the end of Naomi's story prove?

Psalm 40:1-3

Isaiah 46:4

Jeremiah 29:11

8. What is a good choice, regardless of the emotional ups and downs of new starts?

Psalm 27:14

SUMMARY

9. What new starts, if any, are you facing in your life today?

10. How is Naomi's experience encouraging? What can you know about God amidst a new start or transition time?

11. What constructive choices can be made as we face the challenge of a new start?

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *Levirate marriage*, was an Israelite law (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line. The brother of the deceased husband or nearest of kin would marry the widow in order to carry on the line of the deceased. The children born were considered to be the children of the deceased husband, and the first-born child would carry on his name.

Boaz' selflessness would be demonstrated in his willingness to marry Ruth in order to carry on Naomi and Elimelech's line as well as redeem their property. He was not even a brother of Mahlon, but a distant kin. This bloodline was of the tribe of Judah and led to David and finally to Jesus Christ.

LESSON 11

ORPAH

Home for *Orpah* was the grain-filled plateau and pasturelands of Moab east of the Dead Sea. When she came of age, her father gave her in marriage to an Israelite man named Kilion whose family had moved to Moab to escape the famine in Israel. Sadly, Kilion's father, Elimelech, had died, leaving his widow Naomi in Moab, away from their homeland in Judah, with their two sons.

The people of Moab were not friendly with Israel, who had invaded many of the towns of Moab as they conquered the land of Canaan. However, everyone knew they were distant relatives through their forefather, Lot. The laws of Israel did not forbid intermarriage, but the orthodox in Israel would frown on it because of Moab's idols.

Moab was born to Lot (Abraham's nephew) and his oldest daughter after Lot and Lot's daughters escaped the LORD's destruction of Sodom. The girls saw no chance to marry and have children, so one night they got their father so drunk that he was unaware when they had sex with him. Both daughters became pregnant and gave birth to the Moabite and Ammonite nations respectively (Genesis 19:30-38).

Orpah's sister-in-law Ruth, also a Moabite, had married Kilion's older brother, Mahlon. Their mother-in-law, Naomi, believed in Israel's God and talked freely about Him. Orpah loved this mother-in-law, whose name meant "my joy," "my bliss," or "pleasantness of Jehovah."

But the names of Mahlon and Kilion pointed to physical weakness. Mahlon means "sickly" and Kilion, "wasting." These brothers only

lived in Moab ten years before they died. Orpah found herself, along with Ruth, a widow and childless.

Certainly grief and confusion about the future filled her young heart, but we know from Naomi's words that she had responded with kindness toward her husband and her grieving mother-in-law (Ruth 1:8). When they heard there was food again in Naomi's homeland, Orpah set out with Naomi and Ruth on the road to Bethlehem.

But as they traveled, Naomi reasoned that the girls would have little chance to remarry and start a family unless they stayed with their people in Moab. "Go back..." Naomi said. "May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Orpah, along with Ruth, wept aloud and said, "We will go back with you to your people" (Ruth 1:10). But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me?" She insisted there was no future with her in her homeland and impoverished situation.

Orpah wept again as she accepted Naomi's argument. Clearly she was attached and truly loved Naomi. But with Naomi's insistence, Orpah did as she was told. She kissed Naomi good-bye and went back "to her people and her gods" (Ruth 1:15).

Naomi meant well, but her counsel took Orpah away from the most important relationship of all, a relationship with the LORD. Therefore, this story offers sobering lessons for us as believers to always have an eternal perspective when giving counsel to those we love.

Read Ruth 1:1-15.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. How did Orpah, who was probably in her mid-teens, come to marry Kilion, a foreigner and Israelite (1:1-4a)?
2. What do we know about Orpah's marriage (1:4b-5)?

3. a. How did Orpah respond to Naomi's decision to go home to Bethlehem (1:6-7)?

b. With her change of heart, what blessing did Naomi extend to Orpah and Ruth, and why (1:8-9a)?

Reference: Note 4, *YHWH*, p. 81.

c. How did both Orpah and Ruth respond (1:9b-10)?

4. What convincing arguments did Naomi give for her insistence that they leave her (1:11-13)?

5. What was Orpah's response (1:14)?

6. How did Naomi describe Orpah's action (1:15)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

We do not know the outcome of Orpah's decision to go home to her people and her gods, but we do know that Ruth's decision to go with Naomi and make the God of Israel her own reaped tremendous blessing.

There are a number of truths about making difficult decisions that can be observed in the story of Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. One is that the seemingly easiest way may not really be the best. Also, advice from a person we respect spiritually may not always be right. While godly counsel is important, the peace of the LORD in our heart must correspond to that advice.

Most importantly, we can see how easy it is to make the mistake of tackling difficult decisions with a temporal and worldly perspective. While using common sense is encouraged in the Bible, making decisions apart from the LORD is not. He alone is omniscient and knows the very best direction to take. And the LORD's leading is always in our best interest.

So how can we bring the LORD into our decision-making to ensure the best choices? Let's look at the answer to this and other questions regarding making difficult decisions.

1. a. What is the promise to those who seek the LORD's help?

James 1:5

b. What does the Bible say about relying on our own reasoning apart from the wisdom of God and His Word?

Proverbs 3:5

Proverbs 14:12

Note: *death* biblically can mean separation, especially from God, and wrong existence resulting from being out of God's perfect will.

2. How might we pray in times of difficult decision-making?

Psalm 25:4-5

3. We may feel we don't deserve God's help because of our spiritual failures. What do you observe about this in Psalm 25:6-8?

4. What kind of spirit is needed to receive the LORD's guidance?

Psalm 25:9

Psalm 62:7-8

5. How is God's will for us described in the following?

Psalm 25:10a

Romans 12:2b

6. What components of decision-making with the LORD are referred to in the following verses?

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (Psalm 27:14)

Proverbs 15:22

Psalm 143:10 (Galatians 5:25)

Reference: Note 1, *Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

7. God's leading never goes against biblical principles (God's Word).
What do the following suggest about this truth?

Mark 12:24

Psalm 119:9

8. What does Psalm 23 reveal about the benefits of letting the LORD be our "shepherd" in the decisions of life?

SUMMARY

9. a. What did you learn about counseling others from the story of Naomi and Orpah?

b. What is important to do as you are counseling others?

10. a. Are there difficult decisions you (or someone you know) are currently facing?

b. What godly principles of decision-making from this lesson stand out to you?

c. What is your prayer regarding the decisions you are in the process of making?

LESSON 12

RUTH

Nowhere else in the Bible is a woman's kindness and selfless service displayed and honored as *Ruth's* is in the book bearing her name. This young Moabite woman, left widowed and without child after her Israelite husband's death, chose to leave all that was familiar to her and abide with her mother-in-law Naomi, whatever the cost. And Naomi, when she begged Ruth to return to Moab, had made the probable consequences clear to Ruth—she would likely never marry in Israel.

But Ruth clung to Naomi, saying, "Don't urge me to leave you.... Where you go I will go.... Your people will be my people and your God my God" (1:16-16). More than this, Ruth committed herself to Naomi until death: "Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried" (1:17). She promised that only death would separate them.

Ruth's purpose in life was now to help Naomi through her grief and care for her, even if it meant living in a foreign land where people disrespected her race. They also faced extreme poverty in Bethlehem, but Ruth tackled the situation, doing what she had to for them to survive. She went to glean in the fields during barley and wheat harvests, working long hours in the sun and risking mistreatment as an attractive young woman.

But the LORD was with Ruth, leading her to glean in the field of Boaz, a kind and godly man of wealth who just happened to be a relative of Elimelech. Boaz was especially kind to Ruth because he had heard of the sacrifices she had made for Naomi. "May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge," he said. Then he proceeded to do all he could to help her,

telling her to stay in *his* fields where she would be protected, and telling his workers to drop stalks for her to glean and give her water.

Ruth was also blessed by Naomi's keen eye on what the LORD might be doing. Naomi gained hope when she learned Ruth just "happened" to pick Boaz' field. As a relative, Boaz was a potential kinsman-redeemer.¹ This meant that Boaz was a relative who by law could buy the property of Naomi's deceased husband Elimelech, marry Ruth by levirate marriage,² and produce a son to carry on the line of Elimelech.

Boaz's kindness continued, and Naomi decided to move forward in her matchmaking plan for Ruth and Boaz. Knowing he would be spending the night with the other men at the threshing floor during the harvest festivities, she told Ruth to wash, perfume and dress nicely. In the evening, she should go to the threshing floor and remain unseen until she placed herself under the cover at Boaz' feet after he went to sleep.³

Now Ruth had shown courage in moving to Bethlehem to help Naomi, but what courage this action required! She had to creep into the threshing floor at night, lay at Boaz's feet (where he would awake startled by her) and then propose marriage to him with the levirate stipulation! The humility and trust in God's leading through Naomi that Ruth demonstrated here is amazing.

When Boaz awoke around midnight to find Ruth and hear her proposal,⁴ he could not have been more gracious. He praised Ruth for her noble character and assured her he wanted to marry her. However, another closer kinsman-redeemer would have to be given the opportunity to marry Ruth first. Boaz promised to go to the other man in the morning, and if he refused to marry Ruth, Boaz promised to make her his wife.

No doubt Ruth was very anxious about what would come next when she got home and reported all that had happened to Naomi. But her mother-in-law calmly told her to relax, "...the man will not rest until the matter is settled today" (3:18).

Naomi was right. Boaz went straight to the city gate that served as "city hall" for business transactions in Bethlehem. There before ten elders he

met with the closer kinsman, and established that the man wanted the property but not the Moabite as a wife. With this, Boaz accepted his kinsman's offer, publicly stating that he was both redeeming the land and marrying Ruth. The elders and all those at the gate joyfully pronounced blessings on Boaz' marriage.

The happy ending was a new beginning for Ruth and Boaz, two very kind and loving people, and Naomi, in whose arms Ruth placed their first son, Obed, considered to be her grandson. The women of the community, who had no doubt been following all of this carefully, praised Ruth, declaring to Naomi, "your daughter-in-law, who loves you...is better to you than seven sons" (4:5).

Through the beautiful unfolding of Ruth's love story, the Scriptures shout the amazing providence of God in everyday affairs. He delights to work behind the scenes for His children, especially the faithful who practice humility and kindness as Ruth did. God rewarded her with Obed and probably other children, but her faith and godly character would also be reflected in the life of her great-grandson, David, the "shepherd king" of Israel. He brought healing to the nation like no other king, and the Psalms he wrote have touched the lives of countless millions through the ages. The line of David would produce many good kings in Judah, and eventually, the King of Kings Himself, the LORD Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5-6,16).

The story also shows the impartiality of God in using people regardless of their background in His eternal plan. Boaz was a descendant of Rahab, the Jericho harlot who helped the Hebrew spies. Boaz's father was a descendant of Judah, whose line was continued because of the schrewd actions of Tamar, a Canaanite woman (Lesson 6). Ruth was a Moabite, a descendant of Lot and his daughter (Genesis 19:30-38).

Regardless of the background, God looks at the heart. Ruth, a young woman with a huge capacity to love, and a man named Boaz with the same, in the course of life were carrying on the line of the greatest kings of Israel and of Jesus Christ the Lord. They were two humble people who lived lives that God could use to encourage His people through the ages.

Read Ruth 1.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What are the first experiences Ruth went through as a young woman (1:1-4)?

2. What was Ruth's famous response when Naomi insisted she return home (1:16-17)?

3. What happened when Ruth arrived with Naomi in Bethlehem? Where was the focus (1:19-21)?

Read Ruth 2.

4. a. What did Ruth ask Naomi to let her do, and what was the result (2:2-3)?

- b. What did Boaz' greeting to his workers and response to Ruth tell us about him (2:4-5)?

Reference: Note 4, *YHWH*, p. 81.

- c. What did the foreman's report about Ruth tell Boaz about her character (2:6-7)?

5. a. How did Boaz treat Ruth?

2:8-9

2:11 (10)

2:12

2:14-16, 21

b. What humility did Ruth demonstrate toward Boaz (2:10, 13)?

6. When Ruth returned with all the news of the day, Naomi was filled with new hope. "The LORD ...has not stopped showing His kindness" (2:20), she said. Why was Naomi excited about Ruth's news (2:20b)?

Reference: Note 1, *kinsman-redeemer*, p. 116.

Read Ruth 3.

7. At the end of the harvest, Naomi decided it was time to approach Boaz. How did Naomi preface her instructions to Ruth, and what did she tell Ruth to do (3:1-4)?

Reference: Note 3, *Naomi's advice*, p. 116.

8. Boaz woke at midnight surprised to find Ruth at his feet. What proposition did Ruth make that also amazed him (3:9)?

Reference: Note 4, *Ruth's proposition*, p. 116.

9. a. What response did Ruth receive from Boaz after taking such a step of faith (3:10-11)?

Note: *a woman of noble character* (3:11) is a Hebrew expression similar to the one used for Boaz in 2:1. Ruth and Boaz both were known for their impeccable integrity.

b. What matter did Boaz have to settle that put Ruth in another place of trusting God (3:12-13)?

Note: Boaz' answer shows he had already been thinking about marrying Ruth.

Read Ruth 4.

10. a. What did Boaz finalize that day that brought blessings from the elders who respected both Boaz and Ruth (4:9-10)?

b. Optional: What blessings did the elders pronounce over Boaz that mention three other women we have studied (4:11-12)?

11. a. How did God further reward Ruth's heart of kindness (4:13, 16)?

b. What important place did Ruth's choices have in the future?

Matthew 1:5-6, 16

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

DEALING WITH CHANGE

Ruth moved beautifully through the enormous changes in her life. As she trusted God, He was at work on her behalf. She also chose some healthy attitudes that allowed her to progress graciously through the time of upheaval and transition.

Natural negative responses to times of change can, without our knowing it, throw us into patterns of thinking and relating that add to our problems rather than help us get on with life. During times of adjustment, it is critical to choose attitudes that, while perhaps unnatural in feeling, will bear constructive results.

Change is something we all have to face. As we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's observe the productive attitudes which Ruth chose that allowed her to successfully deal with change.

1. To what negative attitudes might Ruth have succumbed as she faced the pressures of her new life in Israel? What attitudes can make change more difficult to endure?

2. a. How can unhealthy attitudes affect relationships with those around us when we are experiencing change?

b. How did Ruth's healthy attitudes affect those around her?

3. Perhaps humility was the most outstanding attitude in Ruth as she worked through a time of change in her life. What does the Bible promise regarding humility?

Proverbs 22:4

Isaiah 57:15

I Peter 5:5b-7

4. Ruth was also willing to work diligently to meet her and Naomi's needs. What does the Bible say regarding this attitude?

Proverbs 13:4

Proverbs 14:23

5. a. Ruth was teachable. What do the following say about this?

Proverbs 18:15

Proverbs 19:20

b. Why is a teachable attitude beneficial in times of change?

6. a. It is easy to become completely self-focused in times of change. But Ruth's focus on helping Naomi was what directed her steps and brought enormous blessing to her life. What blessings does the Bible promise the kind person, which we see in Ruth's story?

Psalm 41:1

Luke 6:38

Matthew 5:7

Isaiah 58:10-11

b. How can serving others help us through a time of change?

SUMMARY

7. What truths about God stand out to you from Ruth's story?

8. What qualities do you see in her life that you want in your own?

9. a. What changes are you are working through in your life right now?

b. What keys to dealing with change from the life of Ruth and the passages of this lesson are helpful to you at this time?

LESSON 12 NOTES

1 *kinsman-redeemer* (2:20). “The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family—e.g., to provide an heir for a brother who had died (Dt. 25:5-10), to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev. 25:25-28), to redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49) and to avenge the killing of a relative (Nu. 35:19-21). Naomi is encouraged when she hears that the LORD has led Ruth to the fields of a relative who might serve as their kinsman-redeemer. This moment of Naomi’s awakened hope is the crucial turning point of the story.” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 364.

2 **Reference:** Note 1, *Levirate marriage*, p. 99.

3 *Naomi’s advice* (3:1-4) “seems strange, but she was not suggesting a seductive act. In reality, Naomi was telling Ruth to act in accordance with Israelite custom and law. It was common for a servant to lie at the feet of his master and even share a part of his covering. By observing this custom, Ruth would inform Boaz that he could be her kinsman-redeemer—that he could find someone to marry her or marry her himself. It was family business, nothing romantic. But the story later became beautifully romantic as Ruth and Boaz developed an unselfish love and deep respect for each other.” *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 427.

4 *Ruth’s proposition* (3:9). In the customs of the time, Boaz understood Ruth was asking him to marry her because he was a relative who could fulfill the levirate marriage law. Boaz would be assuming the responsibilities of Ruth’s husband, and the first-born child would be Mahlon’s heir.

This lesson spans 37 chapters of biblical history so may be slightly longer.

LESSON 13

MICHAL

Michal was a princess, the youngest daughter of Saul, the first king of Israel. Her story took place during the transition from the dark period of the judges (about 1425-1050 B.C.) to the period of the kings in Israel (about 1050-586 B.C. See Timeline, p. 4).

Samuel, the last judge in Israel, had served God faithfully all his life. When it was time for him to retire, the people insisted they have a king like the nations around them. God led Samuel to anoint Michal's father, Saul, as king. Then Samuel helped the king and the people transition to a monarchy that was also a theocracy.¹ For God's people, the king was to be under God's authority as He guided him through prophets like Samuel and by His Spirit.

Michal's father Saul was a strikingly tall and handsome man who in time demonstrated that he was unwilling to submit to God's leadership and the requirements of his theocratic office. So Samuel told Saul the kingdom would be given to another, then secretly anointed David, a young shepherd with a heart for God, to replace Saul. With this, God's Spirit no longer was with Saul. Instead, he had bouts of melancholy when he was oppressed by an evil spirit.² Ironically, because David played the harp and sang, he was called upon to calm King Saul with his music. This is probably when Michal met David. He was very handsome (1 Samuel 16:12, 17:42), and her crush on him may have begun then.

But certainly Michal's heart went wild for David when he became a national hero. David single handedly took down the giant, Goliath, with a sling and a stone "in the name of the God of Israel," and

everyone sang his praises. (Remember, he was Ruth and Boaz' great grandson. Ruth may have still been alive.) David's humble personality caused him to be loved by Saul's entire household as well as the masses.

But as Michal was yearning for David to be her husband (18:20), her father Saul became increasingly jealous and suspicious of David, fearing David was the one Samuel spoke of who would replace him as king. He began to plot to kill David. First, he made David a commander, sending him to the battlefield again and again. When David wasn't killed, but rather amassed more victories and greater admiration from the people, Saul decided to exploit Michal's love for David (18:20-27). He promised her in marriage if David brought him the foreskins of 100 dead Philistines. Saul thought David would surely die trying, but the LORD was with David, and he brought back 200 Philistine foreskins.

At her marriage celebration, Michal probably had no idea that her father wanted to kill the man she loved or that her marriage was a concession, not something Saul was truly celebrating. On her wedding day, her new husband's life was more in jeopardy than ever.

Finally, Saul flat out told his son Jonathan and his attendants to kill David. Jonathan loved David and tried to persuade Saul it would be wrong. But later, Saul was overcome by an evil spirit while David was singing and playing the harp for the king. He hurled his spear at David, who escaped to his home.

By now Michal knew of her father's evil intent toward David and told him he must flee before morning or be killed. She lowered him from the window and told the men sent by Saul that he was ill. Then Saul commanded David be brought to him on his bed to be killed, only to discover Michal had made the bed look as though someone was in it to allow David time to escape. When Saul asked her why she had saved David, "his enemy," Michal told her father that David threatened to kill her if she didn't help him escape.

This may have seemed clever, but it only fueled Saul's twisted thinking that David was planning to overthrow him as king. For the next ten years until the day he died, Saul pursued David as a fugitive. In that time, Michal did not see her husband, and Saul gave her in marriage to a man named Paltiel, even though she was still legally married to David!

Obviously, Michal lived in times when women were viewed as chattel. We have no idea what she thought of this second marriage arrangement, or if it was done in spite by Saul or to stop her complaints of loneliness to her father. We can only be sure it was wrong.

Finally, Saul was killed in battle with the Philistines, and David returned to Judah to be crowned king of southern Israel and later king of all Israel. He sent for Michal, and when she was taken from Paltiel, he followed her, weeping, until he was told to go home. But it doesn't say Michal wept at all. Perhaps she wanted to be queen; perhaps she had never loved anyone like David. In a time of polygamy, David now had several wives, but David was bringing Michal home to be his queen.

After this, David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established it as the nation's capital. In his love for the LORD, he brought the ark of the covenant,³ which represented God's presence with his people, to Jerusalem. He had a great celebration as the ark entered the city. When Michal looked from her window, she saw David, stripped of his royal robes, "leaping and dancing before the LORD" (2 Samuel 6:16). He was the king, and although she had loved him at one time in her life, she despised him for this loss of dignity now. When David arrived home ready to bless his household, Michal went out to meet him and sneeringly cut down his behavior in the celebration.

David was mortified by Michal's pride, and made it clear that he was not ashamed of what he had done "before the LORD." But Michal didn't understand or share David's love for God and commitment, as king, to serving the LORD. His actions that exemplified his humility and praise to Israel's God were disgusting to her.

The last thing we are told about Michal is that she had no children, which was seen as a punishment of God on Michal and the house of Saul for their unfaithfulness.

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. How did Saul try to use Michal's love for David to kill him (18:20, 25)?

b. How did Michal's dream to marry David come true (18:26-27)?

2. a. How did Michal's marriage to David affect her father Saul (18:28-29)?

b. How did Michal's husband grow in fame (18:30,8)?

Read 1 Samuel 19:9-17.

3. a. What finally happened as Saul became more and more obsessed with fears of David (19:10)?

Reference: Note 2, *evil spirit from the LORD*, p. 127.

- b. What did Saul decide to do after David fled (19:11a)?

c. What tragic words did Michal have to speak to David to save his life (19:11b)?

4. a. How did Michal help David escape and cleverly buy time for him to flee (19:12-16)?

b. In his jealousy and suspicion, what lie had Saul begun to believe and try to convince others of (19:17a)?

c. How did Michal probably feed Saul's imaginations about David when Saul questioned her loyalty (19:17b)?

5. Michal was separated from David as he became a fugitive for ten years and refused to kill Saul when he had the chances. What happened in those years of separation (25:42-44)?

Read 2 Samuel selected verses.

6. a. After Saul's death in battle, what happened with David (2:4a; 3:1; 5:3-5)?

b. What did Michal's husband, Paltiel, do when Michal was taken back to her husband David to be his queen (3:16)?

7. Out of love for the LORD, David brought the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolized God's presence among His people, to Jerusalem. What did Michal see David do during the celebration that repulsed her (6:14-16)?

Reference: Note 3, *Ark of the LORD's covenant*, p. 127.

Note: *linen ephod* was a priestly garment.

8. a. David returned home expecting to bless his household. What happened instead (6:20)?

b. What points did David make in response (6:21-22)?

9. What is the final fact given about Michal's life (6:23)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

FREEDOM FROM VANITY

A man by the name of Herbert Marcuse once said, "We do not content ourselves with the life we have in ourselves and in our own being; we desire to live an imaginary life in the mind of others, and for this purpose we endeavor to shine."

Marcuse's words aptly describe the inner life of the person bound by vanity. Born a princess and later crowned a queen, it is likely Michal lived her life motivated by maintaining superiority to others. She

probably fell in love with David because he was the handsome hero of Israel who would make her the envy of every Israeli girl when she married him. Whether it took a lie about David to her father, disregard for God or humiliating attacks on her husband, it didn't seem to matter to Michal. She and her image seemed to be the center of her universe, and the result was a shallow, or vain, existence.

David, on the other hand, was motivated by his respect and love for God, not the desire to appear a proper king. He experienced freedom inwardly; his relationship with God freed him from vanity.

Manners, courtesy and protocol are foundational to any society. The Bible promotes respect and consideration of others. But for our own sakes, we are encouraged to put away vanity as a motivation for our actions. Let's take a look at positive ways to find freedom from vanity.

1. How would you define vanity? What characterizes a "vain" person.

2. a. Vanity was probably very destructive in Michal's life. How does vanity affect our inner life?

b. How does vanity affect our relationships with others?

3. What took the place of vanity in David's life?

4. What does the Bible warn regarding vanity?

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 11:22

5. How is the life liberated from vanity contrasted in the following?

James 3:17-18

Proverbs 31:30

6. Psychologists say we have three basic needs: to love and be loved, to feel secure and to feel significant. The vain person is often subconsciously trying to meet these needs. How can vanity actually prevent a person from having these legitimate needs met?

7. When we open our hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, He meets our most basic needs. What do the following verses promise the one who invites Christ into his/her life regarding the need:

a. To love and be loved?

Galatians 5:22, 23 (John 14:17)

I John 3:1a

b. For security?

John 10:27-30 (Christ speaking)

Hebrews 13:5b-6

c. To feel significant?

I Peter 1:18-19

Ephesians 2:10

8. a. Sadly, David's son Solomon would go after every kind of vain pursuit. What was his observation in the end?

Ecclesiastes 2:10a, 11

b. What pursuit can free us from the weariness and waste of vanity?

Matthew 11:28-30 (Jesus speaking.)

Romans 12:2

SUMMARY

9. Why is vanity a negative force to be reckoned with? How does it affect our lives?

10. What basic needs does Christ promise to fulfill as you stay close to Him?

11. a. In what areas do you struggle with vain thinking?

b. How can you be freed from vanity when you recognize this destructive force in your life?*

*If you have never made the decision to invite Jesus Christ into your life, perhaps you would want to do this now with a simple prayer:

Lord Jesus, I confess I have been living a life of vain pursuit apart from you. Please come into my life and help me find fulfillment in your love. Thank you for the security I can know in your care. Show me the unique purposes you have for my life. Amen.

If you sincerely prayed this prayer, you can know on the basis of His promises that Christ is in your life and will never leave you.

Revelation 3:20

Hebrews 13:5

John 10:27-28

1 John 5:11-13

LESSON 13 NOTES

1 *Theocracy*. The king in Israel was different than the kings of other nations. He was not to be autonomous in his authority and power; rather, he was to be subject to the law of the LORD and the word of the LORD through the prophet (1 Samuel 10:25; 12:23). The king was to be an instrument of the LORD's rule over his people, and the people and king were to continue to recognize the LORD as their ultimate Sovereign (1 Samuel 12:14-15).

2 *evil spirit from the LORD* (1 Samuel 19:9). There are several possible explanations of this phrase.

Evil may be used in the sense of *troubling* here. The evil spirit was a spirit of gloomy, suspicious melancholy, bordering on madness, affecting the mind of Saul. To the Hebrew, every visitation, good or evil, came directly from God. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 286.

Matthew Henry writes: "Those that drive the good Spirit away from them do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. He (Saul) grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented, timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling." *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, p. 305.

"This statement (*evil spirit from God*) and similar ones in Scripture indicate that evil spirits are subject to God's control and operate only within divinely determined boundaries." *NIV Study Bible*, p. 400.

See also Note 3, *Satan, demons*, p. 158.

3 *Ark of the LORD's covenant*. This was a chest that symbolized the throne of the LORD and held the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17; 31:18). The ark's elaborate gold cover symbolized God's throne in the midst of Israel. It also represented the atonement God offered to reconcile people to Himself. Golden cherubim on either side of the cover symbolized attendants to the LORD enthroned there. Thus, the ark symbolized God's presence and was present at many of Israel's notable victories.

LESSON 14

ABIGAIL

To learn about *Abigail*, we go back to the years David was running from Saul as a fugitive. Rejected by God, tormented by evil spirits, and frightened by the success of David, Saul slowly descended into madness as he repeatedly sought to kill David. David sought refuge in Nob, Gath, Adullam, Mizpah, and Keilah. Finally, he and the 600 men who had joined him moved to the wilderness area of Maon in southern Judah.

There, they guarded the enormous herds of a rich man named Nabal in hopes of receiving food in return. When shearing time came, David sent ten of his men to humbly ask for provisions from Nabal in repayment for their services. Nabal's herdsmen would have testified that David and his men had acted as shields against Amalekites, Philistines and wild animals that threatened Nabal's herds. Even so, Nabal responded to the claims of David's men with disinterest and doubt, and he refused to grant their request for food.

In the culture of the time, Nabal's response was insulting, unconventional and unacceptable. Hospitality was seen as an obligation in the Near East, especially at harvest time, which was the yearly time of generosity and giving. When David's men returned with Nabal's answer, David's reaction was also ill-advised. In anger, he impetuously gathered four hundred of his men and set out to kill Nabal and his entire household.

David's overreaction could have cost him the throne in years to come¹ had not Nabal's beautiful and intelligent wife Abigail taken steps to stop

David. When she heard of the situation, she quickly assembled generous provisions for David and his men and made haste to meet them en route.

Upon meeting David, Abigail bowed humbly before him, then demonstrated brilliant tact as she led David to see God's perspective on the situation. She encouraged David to pay no attention to a foolish man like Nabal. She reminded David that he was destined to be king of Israel,² and that as long as David fought God's battles,³ God would avenge David's enemies. She pleaded with David to accept the provisions she brought for his men and turn from the actions that would only lead to remorse for him later.

David immediately recognized the wisdom in Abigail's appeal. He praised her and thanked God for sending her to avert his foolish course of action. As a result, David and his men turned back, and Abigail went home in peace. Only days later, the LORD brought about Nabal's death of heart failure, and David sent for Abigail to be his wife.⁴

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-17.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. How does the author describe Abigail and Nabal (25:2-3)?

2. David had 600 men to feed in the wilderness of Maon in southernmost Judah. He sought to do this by voluntarily protecting Nabal's huge flocks from marauders (Philistines, Amalekites and wild animals), then asking Nabal for food in return.
 - a. What characterized David's approach to Nabal (25:6-9)?

b. What was Nabal's response (25:10-11)?

Note: Hospitality to fellow countrymen was not optional in the Eastern culture. David had not been obligated to earn the provisions which he asked of Nabal.

3. How did Nabal's servants respond differently to David's request (25:14-17)?

Read 1 Samuel 25:18-44.

4. a. Why was David offended by Nabal's response (25:21)?

b. What was David's plan to seek revenge against Nabal (25:13, 22)?

5. a. What was Abigail's immediate response to the situation (25:18-19)? What impresses you about her response?

b. How did Abigail's words and actions change everything? What was her appeal (25:23-25, 27)?

6. While her husband had pretended not to even know David, Abigail had prophetic understanding of God's plans for his life. With what logic did she try to persuade David to change his course of action (25:28-31)?

References: Notes 1, Rumors about David, Note 2, destined for the throne, and Note 3, fights the LORD's battles, p. 136.

7. How did David respond to Abigail's appeal, and what did it show about his character (25:32-35)?

8. What happened to Nabal when Abigail told him what had transpired with David (25:37-38)?

9. Abigail's beauty and wisdom were qualities that made her fit to be a queen. What did David quickly do (25:39b-42)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

THE ART OF PEACEMAKING (DAMAGE CONTROL)

When we are confronted with rage, the natural response is to wage war. However, Jesus Christ taught against responding in kind. Why? Because when we give in to anger, invariably the other person gains control—at least of our emotions and often of the entire situation.

While often counter-instinctive, the art of peacemaking requires first maintaining self-control over our attitudes and tempers, then following certain biblical principles related to resolving conflict. God's grace can give us the ability to seek the best interest of all involved instead of being consumed by a desire to win or retaliate. His Spirit can enable us to put into practice the valuable biblical principles that Abigail so aptly demonstrated.

Disagreements are delicate issues often set in explosive environments. Whether in the home, in the workplace or among national or world leaders, healthy conflict resolution comes only when someone involved has learned the art of peacemaking.

1. a. What are some common situations that call for damage control and peacemaking?

b. What responses can add fuel to the fire in these situations?

2. What are some biblical principles related to peacemaking which Abigail demonstrated?

Proverbs 11:2

Philippians 2:4

2 Timothy 2:24-26

3. What did Jesus teach about not responding in kind to hateful assaults—principles found in Abigail's counsel to David?

Luke 6:27-28

4. a. Our use of the tongue can make or break us in times of conflict. How does the Bible describe the "out-of-control" tongue?

James 1:26

James 3:6

b. What principles regarding constructive use of the tongue did Abigail demonstrate?

Proverbs 15:1

Ecclesiastes 10:12

Ephesians 4:29

5. A natural retaliation measure is to talk negatively to others about the party that hurt us. What does the Bible warn about slander?

Proverbs 11:12

Ephesians 4:31

6. a. While our initial heart attitudes may be negative, what constructive attitudes may we choose?

Colossians 3:12

b. Who empowers us to carry out these choices?

Ephesians 3:16 (Galatians 5:22-23)

c. What is it critical that we do in times of turmoil?

Galatians 5:25

Reference: Note 1, *Holy Spirit*, page 146.

7. What can be observed in Abigail that God gives when we call on Him to help us through a conflict?

2 Timothy 1:7

SUMMARY

8. a. What do you admire about Abigail?

b. What keys to peacemaking did she model for you?

9. What qualities that make for peace do you want the LORD to build into your life?

10. a. Are you or is someone you know presently facing a situation(s) that calls for peacemaking or damage control?

b. Briefly list the biblical principles related to peacemaking and damage control that promise to help in this situation.

LESSON 14 NOTES

- 1 *Rumors about David's alleged conspiracy* to the throne of Saul filled the nation. For this reason, David needed to keep a totally innocent record. One violent attack by David on a well-known Judaeen (Nabal) could have cost David the neutral position his fellow tribesmen in Judah had held toward David. After Saul's death, the people of Judah would be the ones to initially establish David as king of Israel. Their support was important if he was to inherit the throne.
- 2 *The idea that David might be destined to become king* in place of Saul probably had spread among the general populace. Abigail's assessment of David, obviously different from her husband's (25:10-11), was that David was destined to be king (1 Samuel 25:28,30).
- 3 *fights the LORD's battles* (1 Samuel 25:28). Abigail knew about David's victories over the Philistines, battles in which David sought to glorify the LORD and protect God's people rather than exalt himself.

LESSON 15

BATHSHEBA

After the death of Saul, David returned to Hebron where he was crowned king of Judah and eventually of the entire nation of Israel. After this, he moved the capital to Jerusalem as he established Israel as a strong and predominant nation, winning victories over Ammonite, Moabite, Philistine and Amalekite lands. He also established Israel from within, “doing what was just and right for all the people” (2 Samuel 8:15).

Indeed, the Scriptures tell us David was the shepherd king who loved his God and his people. “For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5). This blight on David’s reign may have been prevented had the woman involved, *Bathsheba*, been like Abigail, whose counsel saved David from foolish impulsive action.

It all came about one spring when rather than being on the battlefield with his troops, David remained in Jerusalem at the palace. One evening as he walked about on the roof, he saw a beautiful woman bathing. Giving in to his lust, David inquired about her and found that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah, one of David’s choicest soldiers (cf. 2 Samuel 23:8, 39). Uriah was a Hittite who had a Hebrew name and had married a Hebrew woman, so was most likely a worshiper of the LORD (YHWH).

We don’t know if Bathsheba knew she was in view of David to tempt him. It seems that a modest woman would have been aware of her

surroundings as she bathed. When David sent for her and indicated he wanted to have sex with her, she could have humbly apologized for her indiscretion during her bath and sought to dissuade him. David was known for his devotion to God and for listening to the counsel of his subjects, even women, as with Abigail. But instead, Bathsheba conceded to have sex with David, then washed and returned home.

Later she sent word to David that she was pregnant, and he decided to try to cover up their adultery. He had Uriah come home from the battlefield under the pretense of getting information about the status of the war. In reality, David wanted Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba so that all would think her baby was conceived with her husband. But the plan failed because Uriah refused to “have pleasure” with his wife while his comrades were still in battle. Instead he slept outside David’s house with David’s servants.

The next night, David got Uriah drunk, but he still slept outside David’s palace. So David sent him back to the battlefield with a note for Joab, David’s commander. He instructed Joab to put Uriah at the fiercest front-line position and withdraw the troops so that he would be killed. How a “man after God’s own heart” could rationalize killing Uriah, we can’t imagine, unless perhaps we look to our own cover-ups for sin. At any rate, David assumed that after Uriah’s death, all would believe Bathsheba’s baby had been conceived when Uriah was home. When Joab obeyed David’s order, Uriah and several other Israelite soldiers were killed. After Bathsheba’s time of mourning, David took her as his wife.

Although pagan kings of the day could practice adultery and murder for selfish ends without confrontation, God’s anointed king of Israel could not. God would not bend His laws for anyone, and *especially* not for the king He had placed in power. David was guilty of breaking the sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth commandments (Exodus 20:13-17), and had led Bathsheba to sin, too. The penalty for adultery in Israel was death for both parties (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22).

It is hard to imagine the feelings Bathsheba must have gone through in the months that followed with the secret of her pregnancy by David and death of her loyal and innocent husband Uriah. Perhaps it was a

relief to her when a year later God had the prophet Nathan confront David and force him to come out with the truth.

To do this, Nathan told the king a parable about a rich man who had stolen the prized possession of a poor man. Not knowing it was a parable, David became furious at the injustice of the story. In the heat of the moment, Nathan used the parable to expose David's own wicked actions toward Uriah, a loyal and innocent man.

Nathan went on to tell David about the havoc that would result from his choices. There would be bloodshed in David's family from that point on, one of his sons would lie with one of David's wives in broad daylight (cf. 2 Samuel 16:22), and the child Bathsheba bore David would die.

David was genuinely remorseful over his sin. But even though God forgave David, and Bathsheba if she also repented, their child died. The story reveals the incredible redemption of the LORD, however, as Bathsheba went on to bare David another son named Solomon, a child that God's favor rested on from birth. Solomon would build the exquisite temple in Jerusalem, and, after asking God for wisdom to reign well (1 Kings 3:5-15), would become widely known the world over for his proverbs. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,000 songs (1 Kings 4:32). The Book of Proverbs is comprised mostly of Solomon's sayings, many of which warn to stay away from the adulteress woman. Because of her lack of propriety with David, might Bathsheba have emphasized this caution with her son Solomon?

Although David had been very considerate of the people up to this point, even this "man after God's own heart" fell when he trifled with God's laws. At the height of success and prosperity in his reign, David committed both adultery and murder to satisfy his own appetites. The result was the beginnings of rebellion and turmoil throughout the nation. For whatever reason, Bathsheba, the one woman who could have stopped it all from happening, did not.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

Read 2 Samuel 11.

1. a. Who was Bathsheba, and what mistake did she make (11:2-3)?

b. What was her second mistake (11:4)?

c. David was not a pagan king who could not be resisted without penalty of death. What could Bathsheba have done differently?

2. What happened that Bathsheba could not conceal forever, and what did she have to do (11:5)?

3. How did David first try to hide what had happened? What was the result (11:6-13)?

4. a. What did David resort to next to conceal his sin (11:14-15)?

b. What was the result (11:16-17)?

c. What was David's calloused response to Uriah's and the other men's deaths on his account (11:25)?

5. How was Bathsheba affected by these events (11:26-27)?

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-25.

6. a. After a year of certain regret and guilt, God used Nathan, the prophet, to bring out the truth for all to see. How did the rich man's attitude in Nathan's story correspond to David's (12:1-6)?

b. What did the LORD declare to David through Nathan (12:7-9)?

Note: *your master's wives* (12:8). The Bible only mentions Saul having one wife and one concubine. Since it was customary for new kings to assume the harem of their predecessors, it may be that Nathan merely uses conventional language to emphasize that the Lord had placed David on Saul's throne. *NIV Study Bible*, p. 439.

c. What would be the results of David and Bathsheba's actions (12:10-12, 14)?

7. a. What was David's response that well may have been Bathsheba's, too (12:13a)?

b. What grace did God extend to them (12:13b)?

8. What happened after the loss of Bathsheba's baby (12:24-25)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

KNOWING YOUR WEAKNESSES

Many have naively believed that because they are a Christian, love God and desire to please Him, victory over temptation will come easily or automatically. Inevitably failure, discouragement and disappointment follow this misconception.

The Bible reveals that in the heart of every believer a fleshly nature (or old sinful nature) wars against the indwelling Holy Spirit; and we must continually draw on God's power to keep this rebel nature in check.

Furthermore, this battle does not cease this side of eternity. There is not a time when we become so mature as believers that we no longer have to watch out for the fleshly nature within. David, who was known as "a man after God's own heart," fell hard after years of faithfulness to God.

David and Bathsheba's painful experience warns us to know our vulnerable areas so that we can set healthy boundaries and keep up defenses. As we proceed in our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's take a look at the critical topic of knowing our weaknesses.

1. In what areas might Bathsheba have been weak? What are some common areas where believers fall into temptation?
2. What are some results that can come from a Christian falling to temptation?
3. a. How is the process of falling into temptation described in James 1:13-15?

b. From these verses, what do we need to remember about the attractiveness of the sin that tempts us?

c. What does Proverbs 9:17-18 say about sin's appeal?

4. The areas in which believers fall to temptation are the same as non-believers. How does the Bible describe the *fleshly* or *sinful* nature in every human being?

Romans 8:7

Galatians 5:19-21a

5. a. How do the following passages describe the relationship between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit?

Romans 7:21-23 (18-20)

Galatians 5:17

b. When we invite Jesus Christ into our lives, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us (John 14:16-17). How do the following verses describe the work of the Holy Spirit?

Ezekiel 36:27

Philippians 2:13

References: Note 1, *Holy Spirit*, and Note 2, *Works of the Holy Spirit*, p. 146

6. While the consequences of wrong choices may not go away, what can we do to know peace with God and experience His redemption of the situation?

Isaiah 55:7

I John 1:7, 9

Reference: Note 3, *blood of Jesus...purifies us* (1 John 1:7) p. 146.

7. No matter how deeply rooted the area of weakness, what does God promise as we continue to side with His Spirit in the battle?

Romans 8:33-34

I Corinthians 10:13

I Corinthians 15:58

8. How did Moses overcome his selfish desires according to Hebrews 11:24-27? What does this suggest we must maintain in order to overcome our weaknesses?

SUMMARY

9. a. What does Bathsheba's story teach you about the importance of being on guard against your weaknesses?

b. What does Bathsheba's story reveal about the ripple effects of sin?

10. a. Are there areas in which you are especially vulnerable to temptation?

b. How can you as a believer keep your guard up in these areas of vulnerability?

c. What principles and promises stand out to you as you seek to experience victory over weaknesses?

Note: Some areas of weakness are deeply rooted and require professional counseling to overcome. If you have unsuccessfully struggled for years with an area in your life, ask the Lord to lead you to a godly trained counselor.

LESSON 15 NOTES

1 *Holy Spirit.* God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12; 14:16-17). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (John 3:8).

The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you," as in Colossians 1:27b. See also Note 2, *Works of the Holy Spirit.*

2 *Works of the Holy Spirit.* Because the Holy Spirit is the source of power in the Christian's life, it is important to know who He is. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is revealed along with the Father and the Son as a full and distinct person of the Godhead. As a divine Person, the Holy Spirit is eternal, everywhere present, almighty, perfectly wise, perfectly just, and perfectly good (Hebrews 9:14, Psalm 139:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit's distinct role is the Sanctifier who frees us to lead new lives in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to spiritual rebirth, brings Christ's presence to us, keeps us in touch with God, makes us realize God's love, gives us power to witness and to live the Christian life, and gives us spiritual gifts with which to serve the body of Christ (Titus 3:5, John 14:16-18, Romans 8:26, Romans 5:5, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:5-9, 1 Corinthians 2:4-12). He teaches, encourages, comforts, pleads for us and leads us into all truth (John 16:13, Acts 9:31, John 14:16, Romans 8:27). Romans 8 tells us that allowing our minds to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is the key to 'life and peace' (8:6) and experiencing victory over the sin that seeks to control us. See also Note 3, *Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

3 *blood of Jesus...purifies* us (1:7). "How does Jesus' blood purify us from every sin? In Old Testament times, believers symbolically transferred their sins to an animal which they then sacrificed. The animal died in their place to pay for their sin and to allow them to

continue living in God's favor. God graciously forgave them because of their faith in Him, and anticipated the day when Christ would completely remove sin. Real cleansing from sin came with Jesus, the 'Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). Sin by its very nature brings death—that is a fact as certain as the law of gravity. Jesus did not die for His own sins; He had none. Instead by a transaction that we may never fully understand, He died for the sins of the world. When we commit our lives to Christ and thus identify ourselves with Him, His death becomes ours. He has paid the penalty for our sins, and His blood has purified us. Just as Christ rose from the grave, we rise to a new life of fellowship with Him (Romans 6:4)." *The Life Application Bible, NIV.*

LESSON 16

JEZEBEL

David's son, Solomon, was blessed by God with wisdom and wealth and power. However, he made the mistake in the polygamous mindset of the time of marrying foreign women—hundreds of them. These women worshiped foreign idols, so Solomon built places for them to worship their false gods. After awhile, he himself began to believe in those gods and worship them (1 Kings 11:3-8). For this reason, God told Solomon that after his death, all but the tribe of Judah would rebel against Solomon's son (1 Kings 11:9-13).

Sure enough, after he died, Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officials, led a rebellion against Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and the northern Kingdom of Israel was formed. From this point on, *the nation of Israel was a divided kingdom: Israel in the north and Judah in the south*, each ruled by its own king.

After the split, Jeroboam formed two golden calves to be worshiped in the northern kingdom of Israel, one in Dan and one in Bethel. The first six kings over Israel turned from the LORD and worshiped the golden calves. Then, while godly people may have hoped for a good king, they got the worst ever, Ahab. His wife, *Jezebel*, worshiped the Canaanite god, Baal,¹ and determined to make Baal the national god of Israel. Ahab began to worship Baal, too.

God sent the prophet Elijah to tell Ahab that because of his evil behavior, there would be no rain for several years. Ahab was furious with Elijah, so God told Elijah to escape to a place near Cherith Brook, where he drank the water from the brook and ravens brought him bread and meat to eat each day (1 Kings 16-17). After the brook dried

up from the drought, God led Elijah to stay with a widow and her son in Zarephath, where they were all supernaturally fed by God (1 Kings 17:15-16).

After three years, God told Elijah to tell King Ahab he would end the drought. During this time, Jezebel had sought to kill all the prophets of the LORD in Israel (1 Kings 18:4), and make the people embrace Baalism. God sent Elijah to reveal to the people that He alone was God in Israel.

Elijah challenged King Ahab to bring all the people to Mount Carmel along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who ate their meals at Queen Jezebel's table. There, Elijah challenged Jezebel's prophets to take a bull cut up for sacrifice and put it on their altar, but not light the fire. They were to pray to Baal to burn up the sacrifice supernaturally.

The hundreds of Baal prophets spent all day and into the evening doing everything they could to get their gods to act—dancing, leaping, cutting themselves with knives—but nothing happened. When it was finally Elijah's turn, he built his altar of twelve stones for the tribes of Israel and poured water all over it, built a wide trench around the altar and filled it with water. Then, as Elijah prayed to YHWH, fire came down from heaven and burned the sacrifice, the wood and the stones, and completely dried up the trench. The people instantly fell down to worship God, shouting, "The LORD—He is God!" Elijah told them to capture the false prophets of Baal. Elijah killed all of them so they could not lead the people in worship anymore.

When this was finished, Elijah told Ahab rain was coming. Sure enough, King Ahab did not reach home before getting soaked from the downpour.

When Ahab told all the events of the day to Jezebel, she was furious. She sent a messenger to Elijah telling him that he would be dead in 24 hours.

Exhausted, Elijah was overcome with fear and ran to the wilderness to hide. There, God ministered to him through an angel² who then sent Elijah on the 40 day and night journey to Mt. Horeb. There God

encouraged the prophet and told him that he was not alone; there were 7,000 faithful people in Israel who had never worshiped Baal.

Elijah's whereabouts remained unknown to Jezebel for a number of years, even though they searched diligently for him. That is, until King Ahab decided he wanted to own the vineyard of a man named Naboth (1 Kings 21). Ahab offered to buy the vineyard, but Naboth wanted to keep the vineyard that had been in his family for generations. When Jezebel saw Ahab was downcast about this, she arranged for a mock trial where she hired two men to falsely accuse Naboth of speaking against God and the king. Naboth was taken outside the city and stoned to death.

When Ahab went down to take the vineyard, to his surprise Elijah showed up. God had sent Elijah to tell Ahab that Jezebel's actions would lead to Ahab's death. He said that the dogs who licked up the blood of Naboth at his stoning would also lick up his blood. With this, the Scriptures adds: "There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife" (1 Kings 21:25). Elijah also told Ahab that his bloodline would be entirely cut off because of how he had led Israel into sin (21:21-22).

Three years later, Ahab was killed in battle with Syria. When his chariot was washed, dogs came and licked up the blood as Elijah had predicted. Jezebel lived another eight years. Then Jehu, commander of Joram's army, killed Jezebel's son, Joram, and seized the throne of the Northern Kingdom. When Jezebel heard Jehu was coming, she put on eye make-up, fixed her hair and called him a murderer from her high palace window. He had her eunuch servants throw her down, horses trampled her underfoot, then dogs ate her body (2 Kings 9:32f). So ended the life of Israel's most evil queen.

Read 1 Kings selected verses.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. Read 1 Kings 16:29-33. Who was Jezebel (16:31)?

2. a. Because of his evils, what did the LORD tell Ahab through the prophet Elijah (17:1)?

b. What did Jezebel try to do during this time (18:4, 13)?

c. When and what did the LORD tell Elijah to speak to Ahab (18:1-2a)?

Read 1 Kings 18:16-46.

3. Whom did Elijah have Ahab gather on Mount Carmel (18:19)?

Reference: Note 1, *Baals and Ashtoreths*, p. 80.

4. What contest did Elijah set up to prove the LORD (YHWH) the only true God in Israel (18:21-24)?

5. a. What did the 450 prophets of Baal do all morning (18:26)?

b. What did Elijah suggest (18:27)?

c. How did the prophets carry on until evening (18:28-29)?

6. a. As the people watched, how did Elijah build his altar with the twelve stones representing the tribes of Israel (18:32-35)?

b. What was Elijah's simple, earnest prayer to the LORD (YHWH), God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (18:37)?

Reference: Note 4, *YHWH*, p. 81.

7. What happened after Elijah's prayer (18:38-40)?

8. How did Elijah's prophecy also prove YHWH that day (18:45)?

Read 1 King 19 Selected Verses.

9. a. What did Ahab tell Jezebel, and what was her undaunted response (19:1-3)?

Reference: Note 3, *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life*, p. 158.

b. After an angel ministered to Elijah, where did he end up and what did the LORD reassure him of (19:8, 18)?

Read 1 Kings 21:5-26.

10. a. What did Jezebel do to secure the vineyard Ahab wanted (21:8-10)?

b. What did the LORD announce to Ahab when he went to take Naboth's vineyard (21:19, 21, 23)?

11. a. What part did Jezebel have in the harsh judgment of her husband (21:25)?

b. Ahab was killed in battle, and dogs licked his blood as they washed the chariot he died in. How was Jezebel's death eight years later described (2 Kings 9:30-37)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

THE REALITY OF EVIL

Jezebel almost seems like a wicked witch in a children's story, but in fact, she was a real person. Her life exemplifies the hardened state and terrible end of one completely given to selfishness and denial of God.

Jezebel's life also brings us face to face with the reality of evil in the world.

In our last lesson, we looked at the sinful nature present in the human heart that must be overcome by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson, we will look at what happens when the selfish nature is given free reign. The Bible reveals that we cannot truly be god of our own lives. If we choose to reject God and our God-given conscience, there is one, the Scriptures declare, who is already the god of self-centeredness. He is called Satan,⁴ or the devil, and as lord of all who oppose God, he is exposed as the father of all evil.

Jezebel's life stands as an example of one who, whether knowingly or not, sold herself out to do Satan's bidding. In her zealous support of the anti-God worship of Baals and Ashtoreths, she dared to curse her own Creator and became a pawn in the hands of Satan. He used her for evil, then brutally destroyed her.

In his classic publication, *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis states: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors."⁵

It is important to have a balanced understanding of the enemy of God and our soul, to be aware that turning on God gives Satan control, and to know our means to complete victory over him. Unlike Jezebel, to be a part of the solution rather than the problem of evil in the world, we must know how to stand solidly on God's side in the battle for good. As we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's make some observations about the reality of evil in our world.

1. a. What choices did Jezebel make that perpetrated evil?

b. What were some of the results of Jezebel's evil actions?

2. a. How is Satan described in the following verses?

John 8:44b (Jesus speaking)

John 10:10 (Jesus using analogy to compare His mission with that of Satan)

(Example: Luke 9:42)

2 Corinthians 11:14

I Thessalonians 3:5

I John 5:19 (Revelation 12:9)

2 Corinthians 4:4

b. Which of the above traits were exhibited in Jezebel's character?

c. According to the Bible, the destructive world system, based upon force, greed, selfish ambition and sinful pleasure, originates with Satan (Ephesians 2:1-2). Which of these did Jezebel practice?

3. The Bible describes the world as a battlefield where Satan and his unseen forces of evil fight for control and/or destruction of God's beloved creation, mankind. What does Ephesians 6:11-12 declare about our battle with evil?

Reference: Note 4, *Satan, demons*, page 158.

4. a. As a created being, Satan is not all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere present or in any way equal with his Creator, God. However, as angels, he and his forces are immortal, calculated, cruel, and very strong (cf. Acts 19:13-16). According to the Bible, who has authority over Satan?

1 Peter 3:21c-22

b. What is the basis for Satan's ultimate defeat, according to Colossians 2:15?

5. Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel was a demonstration of the power of God over Satan's evil. What choices can we make to assure God's victory in the battle with evil we face?

Ephesians 6:10-11

Ephesians 6:14-18 (list the pieces of divine armor)

James 4:7

6. What is God's promise when we trust Him in the battle against evil?

Psalm 44:5

I John 4:4

SUMMARY

7. While Jezebel lived to please herself, who was really controlling her life? What warning is here for you?

8. a. What can you do to side with good and against evil in the world today?

b. Is there a decision you are making now that these truths should affect?

LESSON 16 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 1, *Baals and Ashtoreths*, p. 80. See also Note 2, *YHWH, LORD*, p. 15.

2 Reference: Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

3 *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life* (19:3). "In spite of Elijah's great triumph in the trial on Mount Carmel and the dramatic demonstration that Elijah's God is the LORD of heaven and earth and the source of Israel's blessings, Jezebel is undaunted. Hers is no empty threat, and Ahab has shown that he is either unwilling or unable to restrain her. So Elijah knows that one of the main sources of Israel's present apostasy is still spewing out its poison and that his own life is in danger." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 513.

4 *Satan, demons*. The Bible refers to Satan as an angelic being who led a heavenly revolt against God and consequently was cast out of heaven with his rebelling host of angels (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9). Under his leadership, these angelic beings became known as demons, and are very organized in their schemes and attacks on human beings (Ephesians 6:12). Satan and his forces work to get people to worship Satan (Luke 4:7) and to prevent individuals from turning to God (Luke 4:8). Satan's defeat is promised in Genesis 3:15 and completed at the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:15). He is still a force to be reckoned with until Christ returns to judge the earth (Matthew 16:27). James 4:7 instructs believers to resist the devil (or demonic forces) by continually willing God's leadership in their lives. The authority Jesus exercised over demonic power in New Testament accounts proved that He was the Messiah (Christ) and Son of God as He claimed. See also Note 2, *Angels*, p. 215.

5 C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, page 1.

LESSON 17

HULDAH

The northern kingdom, called Israel, had 19 kings, and all of them led the people away from God and into greater and greater idolatry. God had promised that if they were faithful to Him, they would be blessed in every way. But if they were unfaithful and worshiped the Canaanite idols with their repulsive practices, he would judge them as he had judged the people in the land before them.

In 722 B.C., after more than 200 years of idolatry in Israel, God allowed Assyria to take over the northern kingdom, seizing the capital in Samaria. Those who had not fled to the southern kingdom of Judah were either massacred or taken into captivity and dispersed throughout Assyrian lands.

During those same 200 years, the southern kingdom of Judah had 165 years of good kings. They were all in the line of David and led the people toward worship of God. In the remaining years, however, evil kings had injected idolatry and its horrid practices in the bloodstream of the nation of Judah, causing irreparable damage.

Josiah was the last great king of Judah. He became king at age eight, and at sixteen began to live to please the LORD. He destroyed every idol in the land he could get his hands on and then set up a system to repair the Temple. While they were in the process of doing this, a copy of the Book of the Law of Moses was found and read to the king. Shocked as he heard the promise of judgment for the sins Judah had committed, Josiah had the high priest and his palace administrator seek the mind of God through a prophet.

The young king was close to Jeremiah, but for whatever reason, probably accessibility, they went instead to the prophetess *Huldah*. She lived with her family in Jerusalem. Her husband was Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe (probably the king's) and possibly the uncle of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:7).

God would clearly impress on a true prophet what He Himself would say. Huldah told them the message God gave her plainly. "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to others gods" (2 Kings 22:16-17). But the LORD also had Huldah tell Josiah that because his heart was responsive and humble before Him in hearing the LORD's words, Josiah would not see the disaster of the fall of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom.

As a result of Huldah's courage to bear the true word of God, even though unpleasant, Josiah continued to do everything he could to purify Judah and the people from idolatry. He held the largest Passover celebration since Samuel's day for the people at Jerusalem. He also renewed his personal covenant to love and serve the LORD according to His law, and led the people to do the same.

Even though Jerusalem would soon fall to Babylon and its people taken into exile, we can be sure that the years of Josiah's reign brought many people out of the darkness of idolatry and into the light of God's presence, affecting their children after them for centuries to come.

Josiah died in battle against Egypt at age 39, after ruling Judah 31 years. Of all the kings, he had the most perfect record of faithfulness and purity before God.

Jerusalem fell 25 years later in 586 B.C.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

Read Selected Passages.

1. How were the kings just prior to Josiah's reign described (his grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon)?

Manasseh (55 year reign) 2 Kings 21:1-6, 9, 16

Amon (2 year reign) 2 Kings 21:21-23

2. What are we told about Josiah?

2 Kings 22:1-2

3. In the eighteenth year of his reign, what happened as Josiah was having the temple restored for worship of the LORD?

2 Kings 22:8, 10

Note: The Book of the Law could have been the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) or all or part of Deuteronomy.

4. Summarize what the Book of the Law promised:

a. If Israel worshiped the LORD, obeyed His laws and did not serve idols (Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 10-11)

b. If Israel disregarded God's laws and followed other gods (Deuteronomy 28:15-20, 49-52, 64-65).

5. Josiah had seen these things happen to the northern kingdom when they abandoned God and fell into repulsive idolatry. But Judah had done the same under Josiah's father and grandfather.

Josiah ordered Hilkiah the priest and several others to immediately ask God, through a prophet, about where Judah stood (2 Kings 22:11-13).

Huldah was known as a prophetess, gifted to receive God's word to them. What do we learn about her in 2 Kings 22:14?

6. a. What answer regarding Judah's future did God give through Huldah (22:15-17)?

b. What did God have to say to Josiah (22:18-20)?

7. After hearing from Huldah, how did Josiah seek to lead the people back to God and please God himself?

2 Kings 23:1-2

2 Kings 23:3

2 Kings 23:4, 10, 12, 15

2 Kings 23:21

Note: The Passover was an annual celebration commanded by God to remind the people of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

8. How was Josiah described in 2 Kings 23:25?

9. Josiah died in battle at age 39 after reigning in Judah 31 years. What happened 25 years later, in fulfillment of Huldah's prophecy?

2 Kings 25:8-11, 21b

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

THE POWER OF TRUTH

Huldah was willing to state the hard truth, even to King Josiah. As a result of Huldah's action of courage and faithfulness, she is placed alongside Deborah and Hannah as a woman whose wisdom redirected

the course of Israel. King Josiah accepted truth and took humble, courageous steps as the leader of his nation. The southern kingdom embraced the truth and turned their land temporarily from the judgment of God. The power of the truth is vividly illustrated in Huldah's story.

Sometimes the truth is hard, and it can be far easier to misconstrue or simply lie about the facts. Yet the Bible reveals that telling the truth, no matter how difficult, ultimately leads to the highest good. In Lesson 5 (cf. page 24), we learned that God has created the universe to be governed by certain spiritual as well as physical principles. One of these principles is that truth is constructive and, in the end, powerful. As we reflect on Huldah's story, let's consider what the Bible has to say about the power of truth.

1. Why is it hard to tell the truth at times? Why might it have been difficult for Huldah to present the full message of God to King Josiah?

2. a. How is honesty viewed in our society today?

b. What are the results?

3. Not telling the whole truth can easily become a habit in an individual or a society. What problems eventually result from the practice of dishonesty by an individual or society?

Psalm 36:3

Isaiah 59:4

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

4. In the Scriptures, the truth is synonymous with God's Word and wisdom. What do the following verses say about the truth of God's Word?

Psalm 119:105

Psalm 119:45

John 8:31a, 32

Psalm 33:4

5. According to the Scriptures, where do we meet God's truth?

John 1:14

John 18:37b

6. What do the following reveal about practicing honesty with each other, as reflected in Huldah's story?

Ephesians 4:15, 25

7. What are some areas in which people can deceive themselves?

Galatians 6:3

James 1:22

Revelation 3:17

8. Josiah was honest with himself and Israel after hearing the message of God through Huldah. As with Huldah, Josiah and Israel, what are the benefits of honesty with ourselves and God?

Psalms 32:5-8

SUMMARY

9. What did Huldah's story teach about the power of truth that is helpful to you?

10. a. What have you reviewed in this lesson about the truth and God's Word?

b. What did you see about the truth and Jesus Christ?

11. Are there situations where you are tempted to lie or shy away from the truth? Why is honesty the best policy in this situation?

12. While God's promises were specifically to Israel in the Book of the Law, what warnings are there for our times?

Note: Building on the Basics
is slightly longer in this lesson.

LESSON 18

HERODIAS

The people of southern kingdom were in exile about 70 years when Artaxerxes, the king of Babylon, allowed Ezra and later Nehemiah to return to Israel with as many Jews as wanted to go back. They rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Though the people were back, they were not free. Over the next 400 years, they were ruled by the Persians, then Greeks, Egyptians, and Syrians. Then for about a hundred years they became free while a family of Jewish leaders called the Maccabees kept invaders out of Judah. But the Jews neglected worship of God again and the Roman army invaded, bringing occupation by one of the strongest governments in all of history.

The Roman emperor sent a soldier later known as Herod the Great, a non-Jew, to be king of Judah. He was a ruthless man the people hated. Herod rebuilt the Temple in an attempt to make friends with the Jewish people. But they longed for the coming of the Messiah whom God had promised through the prophets. He would free the Jewish people and set up Israel as *the* world power. It was during this time of political unrest that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

After Herod the Great's death, Rome split leadership in Palestine between three of Herod's sons. These were called tetrarchs, and Herod Antipas was one of these. The historian Josephus records that while Antipas was in Rome, he visited his half-brother, Phillip, who was married to *Herodias*, his niece and the granddaughter of Herod the Great. Most likely this young woman did not see much prestige in Phillip's future. During that visit, Herodias decided to marry Phillip's

half-brother and her uncle Herod Antipas. She divorced Phillip, Herod divorced his wife, the daughter of the king of Arabia, and they married. Herod and Herodias moved back to Palestine where Herod held the prestigious position of tetrarch. Their marriage was clearly against the laws of Israel (Leviticus 18:16) and disgusting to the people. But the Herod's were non-Jews (actually descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother), and did not follow laws of Moses. Instead, they followed the fashions of the day in Rome, which were becoming increasingly amoral.

During this time, a man called John the Baptist had become tremendously popular and influential in Palestine. Called by God from birth to prepare the way for the Messiah (Luke 1), John lived and preached in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. His prophecy from God was that the people should turn from sin and be baptized in preparation for the soon-coming Messiah.

When Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized by John, both to identify with John's ministry and to begin His own public ministry, John saw the heavens open and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descend upon Jesus. At the same time, a voice from heaven said, "This is my dear Son, whom I love. I am greatly pleased with Him" (Matthew 3:17). Thus recognizing Jesus as the promised Messiah, John urged his disciples to follow Him.

John was so popular, however, that he still had a following until Herod Antipas arrested him. This happened because John had the nerve to rebuke Herod for marrying his brother's wife while his brother was still living. This enraged Herodias, who wanted John killed. But Herod was afraid to kill the Baptist, who was considered to be a prophet by many and was tremendously popular with the people. Also, Herod liked to listen to John, though puzzled by his words (Mark 6:20).

Herodias, a true descendant of Herod the Great, had his ruthless spirit and did not give up on her intent to kill John the Baptist. Her opportunity for revenge came during Herod's birthday celebration with a large selection of high level people in attendance. Some say Herodias planned to trap her husband into killing John that day. Regardless, after everyone had been eating and drinking freely, Herodias' teen-aged daughter by Phillip, performed a lascivious dance for Herod and his guests. It was so erotically pleasing that Herod told her he would give

her anything she asked for. The girl went straight to her mother to ask what she should request, then returned to say, “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

This was not amusing to Herod, who had protected John, knowing him “to be a righteous and holy man.” In fact, it “greatly distressed him.” But Herodias did not care if she ruined Herod’s birthday; she wanted John dead, and this was her chance. The executioner was sent to the jail, beheaded John, the prophet of God, and brought his head on a platter to Salome who took it straight to her mother. Herodias had caused her daughter and husband to murder an innocent man without even a trial. John was probably about 32 years old.

The Scriptures say no more about Herodias, but the historian Josephus tells us that Herodias was jealous of her brother Agrippa’s status as king instead of tetrarch. She encouraged Herod to appeal to Caesar Caligula to give him the title of king, too. But her brother Agrippa was close to Caligula and told him that Herod had conspired against him. Caligula questioned Herod and Herodias, but unsatisfied with their answers, stripped Herod of his position and banished him to Gaul. Caligula offered Herodias her freedom, but she went with her husband. From what we have seen, it must have been to her best advantage.

Born into the family of the Herod’s, perhaps Herodias never had a chance to be anything but self-centered, immoral and cruel. But John the Baptist had offered Herod and Herodias the way of repentance and to a right relationship with God. Tragically, Herodias instead chose a path of revenge and murder of a godly man.

Read Mark 6:14-29.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. Herod was tetrarch of Galilee and heard about Jesus and His miracles. What were people saying about Jesus (6:14-15)?

b. Who did Herod suspect Jesus to be (6:16)?

2. a. Why had Herod previously arrested and imprisoned John the Baptist? What had John had courage to tell Herod (6:17-18)?

Reference: Note 1, *Herodias*, p. 178.

b. What was Herodias' response to John the Baptist's message (6:19a)?

3. a. Why did Herod prevent Herodias from having John killed (6:20)?

b. What does Matthew 14:5 add to this?

4. What did Herodias find in Herod's birthday celebration, and who was in attendance that day (6:21)?

5. a. How did Herodias obligate Herod to kill John (6:22-24)?

b. What did Herodias' daughter immediately request of her step-father (6:25)?

6. How did Herod respond, and what tragically happened (6:26-28)?

7. How did Herodias' evil affect her daughter and husband?

8. a. What did John's disciples do when they heard the sad news?

Matthew 14:12

b. What was Jesus' response?

Matthew 14:13

9. Jesus interacted with Pilate during the mock trial before His crucifixion. But when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod to decide his sentence, what did Jesus do? Luke 23:8-9

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

RESPONDING TO SIN AND GUILT

Herodias, like Jezebel, is a sad picture of what a woman can become when she completely stifles her conscience and yields to her selfish nature. Because she refused the opportunity to hear, receive and respond correctly to the directions God gave her through a godly man, she has gone down in history as one of its most evil women.

The warning for us regards the importance of embracing God's truth about our sin whenever we hear it. If we turn our backs and harden our hearts, that same hardened heart may surprise us with how low it can cause us to go.

In the 1970s, a well-known psychiatrist by the name of Karl Menninger grappled with the fact that our society was moving toward the popular view that sin is an outdated idea. In his book *Whatever Became of Sin?* he wrote:

The very word "sin," which seems to have disappeared, was a proud word. It was once a strong word, an ominous and serious word. It described a central point in every civilized human being's life plan and life style. But the word went away. It has almost disappeared—the word, along with the notion. Why? Doesn't anyone sin anymore? Doesn't anyone believe in sin?²

Menninger went on to warn that sin and the guilt it produces are realities we cannot pretend away without paying a terrible price.

In Herodias' society, people also sought to "outdate" the concept of sin. When confronted with her immorality, Herodias responded by attacking the one who reminded her of her guilt. Her actions involved ruthlessly murdering a prophet of God, snuffing out her husband's spark of faith and creating a monster like herself in her daughter. Indeed, Herodias' life is a great testimony of how not to respond when confronted with our sin and guilt. It is also an example of what happens when a person or society tries to simply rationalize the concept of sin as outdated.

In the midst of this dreary account, however, the Bible reveals liberating truths about responding to sin and guilt. It is to these wonderful principles for hope and prosperity that we will now turn as we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*.

1. Herodias' life could have changed dramatically had she embraced the teachings of the prophet John the Baptist. According to Acts 3:19, what did God want to happen in her life?

2. a. What do you think kept Herodias from acknowledging her sin and repenting of her lifestyle?

b. What does Ephesians 4:17-19 suggest?

3. On what basis are all people accountable for their sin?

Romans 1:18-20

Romans 2:14-15

Reference: Note 3, *sin*, p. 178.

4. The Bible reveals that God hates sin because of its destructive nature. What do the following verses warn about the aggressive and corruptive nature of sin?

Romans 1:28-32 (summarize)

Romans 2:5-6 (also 7-10)

5. What are some factors that can persuade us to face guilt?

Psalm 51:3

John 16:7-8

Hebrews 4:12-13

6. What does the Bible reveal about God's character that encourages us to approach Him with a repentant heart?

Psalm 103:8-10

Romans 2:4

Hebrews 4:15-16 (speaking of Jesus Christ)

2 Peter 3:9

7. We can find freedom from guilt by confessing specific sin to God. What is God's promise when we come to Him genuinely repentant?

1 John 1:9

Note: According to Old and New Testament terminology, confession means to agree with God about our sin, to acknowledge violation of His principles. But it also involves repentance, a genuine regret and determination to change wrong attitudes and behavior. In summary, confession with repentance involves making changes that will prevent repeating the sinful action.

8. What price did God pay to justly forgive the sins of our lives?

Isaiah 53:5-6

Hebrews 9:22, 14

9. a. What is characteristic of God's forgiveness?

Ephesians 2:8-9

b. What are the results of responding to our sin and guilt as God's word directs?

Romans 5:1

Romans 6:22

SUMMARY

10. What did you learn from Herodias about the wrong responses to sin and guilt?

11. What can keep you from honestly facing your sin?

Reference: See also Notes 4-5, *False guilt, true guilt*, pp. 178-179.

12. What have you seen in this lesson about constructive responses to sin and guilt?

13. What benefits come with dealing with sin and guilt in this way?

Forgiveness is the miracle of a fresh start, a new beginning, a second chance. Already on Mount Sinai God revealed himself as a God who delights in forgiving sins. Because of his compassion, love, grace and mercy, God offers pardon for our sins by putting them out of sight, out of reach, out of mind and out of existence. Christ's shedding of his blood on the cross, foreshadowed by the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, was the final and ultimate sacrifice, where Jesus took all our sins--all the selfishness, the hatred, the deceit, the pride--and nailed them to the cross so that those who believe might be declared innocent and free from sin's controlling power.

The Bible clearly tells us that if we confess our sins, acknowledging our guilt and our responsibility, God can be counted on to forgive. The Bible goes on to remind us that those whose lives have been changed by the power of forgiveness must respond by holding out the hand of a new beginning to any who have sinned against them. We must be people who have learned to freely forgive.

The NIV Topical Study Bible, p. 1001.

LESSON 18 NOTES

1 *Herodias* was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, who was king over Palestine when Jesus and John the Baptist were born. Her father was Aristobulus. She married her uncle, Herod Philip, who lived in Rome. While a guest in their home, Herod Antipas and Herodias decided to leave their spouses (Herod Antipas was married to the daughter of a king in Arabia) to marry each other. As noted in the commentary, this was clearly against the laws of Israel (Leviticus 18:16) and disgusting to the people. The Herod's were non-Jews (actually descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother), and did not follow laws of Moses. Instead, they followed the fashions of the day in Rome, which was becoming increasingly amoral. John the Baptist alone had the courage to confront Herod and Herodias with the truth that they might repent and turn to God.

2 Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* pp. 1-2.

3 The Old Testament Hebrew word for *sin* means "missing the mark" or falling short of God's standards. The New Testament Greek word for *sin* means "wrongdoing," "unrighteousness," or "injustice."

4 *False guilt* "stems from people foisting their sin (greed, self-pity, selfishness, etc.) or expectations on us. It also grows from unrealistic expectations from ourselves. True guilt originates from sin and leads us to confession and restitution." Judith Couchman, *Getting a Grip on Guilt* p. 34.

5 *False guilt*. In her book, *Falling Apart or Coming Together*, Lois Walfrid Johnson contrasts differences between true and false guilt (next page).

	<u>TRUE GUILT</u>	<u>FALSE GUILT</u>
GUILT PRODUCER	The Holy Spirit convicts, based on truth.	Satan condemns, based on lies.
OBJECTIVE	Improvement.	Defeat.
SPOTLIGHT	Specific, unforgiven sin.	Past failures and forgiven sin; general in nature.
YOUR REACTION	Remorse and repentance; asking for forgiveness.	Helplessness; a no-win situation; not knowing how to make a change; no peace if you ask for forgiveness.
GUILT PRODUCER'S ACTION	Grace; forgiveness.	Accusation.
RESULT	Peace; feeling set free, cleansed and loved.	No peace; defeat; hopelessness; despair; worthlessness. Feeling emotionally, spiritually and physically tired.

LESSON 19

SALOME, MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOHN

Jesus of Nazareth was born a few months after his cousin, John, who later became known as the Baptist. Jesus was a carpenter, after His father Joseph's trade, until he began His ministry around the age of thirty. The first year of Jesus' three-year ministry was one of inauguration, the second of popularity, and the third of opposition which led to His crucifixion.

It was during the second year of ministry that Jesus began to call His disciples. Of the Twelve, the three closest disciples to Jesus were Peter, James and John, all three fishermen. James and John were brothers and the sons of Zebedee and his wife *Salome*. The two brothers had been disciples of John the Baptist, who recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah at His baptism. The Baptist then pointed Jesus out to his disciples (John 1:29, 35). When Jesus told James and John to follow Him, they immediately left their nets by the Sea of Galilee and traveled with Jesus in His itinerant ministry.

But from this point on, Salome was also very involved with the ministry of Jesus. Not only were her sons Jesus' closest disciples, she herself spent time among the women who traveled with Jesus in Galilee, meeting the needs of Him and His disciples (Mark 15:40-41). No doubt she watched Jesus perform miracles of healing and deliverance, saw Him feed thousands with five loaves and three fish, and heard her sons talk of His raising people from the dead, walking on water and calming storms. More than this, she was moved by His profound teachings on love, forgiveness, and the Kingdom of God. As throngs of people followed Jesus and thousands gathered to hear Him

teach, she observed Jesus' completely selfless life focused on glorifying God and serving the poor and outcasts.

Then, in Jesus' third year of ministry, she felt the strain as the religious leaders began to plot to kill Jesus. He finally withdrew with His disciples to a region near the desert and a village called Ephraim (John 11:53-57). There, He prepared them for His departure.

Finally, as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover, Salome could feel the heaviness over the group. Jesus had already told his disciples He would be betrayed, killed, and be raised to life on the third day (Matthew 17:22-23). But the disciples never knew how to process this. They thought Messiah, whom the prophets foretold, would be a victorious King in Israel to free her from Roman oppression.¹

As they traveled, Jesus again prophesied specifics of what was about to happen. "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life!" (Matthew 20:18-19).

It was after these disturbing words that Salome came to Jesus with her sons, James and John, and knelt before Him. When Jesus asked what Salome wanted Him to do, she answered, with her sons in full agreement, that she wanted James and John to be Jesus' top men when He set up His kingdom, sitting at Jesus' right and left hand.

Jesus' response to Salome was gracious. He gently tried to help her see that for James and John to stay close to Him would require persecution and hardship for His name. "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

James and John answered, "Yes, we can." Jesus responded with sobering words, "Indeed, you will, but only my Father can determine who has these positions" (Matthew 20:22-23).

The other disciples must have had their eye on these positions, too, because Salome's bold request made them angry at James and John. Jesus used the moment to teach his disciples the true definition of

greatness: “whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

After this awkward situation, Salome remained faithful to Jesus through the difficult days that followed. She stood at the cross with Jesus’ mother Mary during the long hours of Jesus’ grief and pain (Matthew 27:55-56), and listened as Jesus charged her son, John, to care for His mother (John 19:26-27).

Two days later, Salome left before sunrise with the women who had prepared spices for Jesus’ tomb (Mark 16:1f). To their shock, they discovered the stone rolled away and an angel² inside announcing Jesus had risen just as He had promised! Over the next 40 days, no doubt Salome was among those privileged to see Jesus in His resurrection body and hear His teaching from the Scriptures that proved Him the long-awaited Christ.

We can imagine Salome served in the early church for the rest of her life alongside her sons James and John. James became the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2), but John lived well into his nineties as the longest living apostle. He wrote five books of the New Testament: the Gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation.

In the final analysis, the spiritual legacy of Salome was beyond her imagination, and she herself stands as an example of persevering faithfulness to the LORD.

Read Selected Verses.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. How were Salome’s sons, James and John, called by Jesus to be His disciples? Mark 1:19-20

2. How do these verses exemplify why the other disciples called Salome's boys "sons of thunder?" Luke 9:54 (51-56)

3. a. The Pharisees had been plotting for some time to kill Jesus (Matthew 12:14). What had Jesus been explaining for some time?

Matthew 16:21

Read Matthew 20:17-28.

b. What did Jesus tell them again during this journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (20:18-19)?

4. a. What did Salome do after this distressing prophecy (20:20-21)?

b. What was Jesus' twofold response (20:22-23)?

5. Most likely the other disciples were also ambitious for these places of honor. What was their response to Salome's request (which her sons no doubt agreed to) (20:24)?

6. How did Jesus use this situation to define true greatness?

Matthew 20:25-27

Matthew 20:28

Read Selected Verses.

7. Salome and her sons experienced a gentle rebuke here, but she was a faithful disciple to the end. Where was Salome when Jesus was crucified? Matthew 27:55-56

8. What amazing experience did she have on the third day?

Mark 16:1-8

9. What did Salome most likely also experience?

Luke 24:36, 50-52

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

A LOOK AT FAVORITISM

Favoritism is prevalent in society--in the political world, the church, the workplace, the family. Individuals or a culture may favor pretty

over plain, young over aged, rich over poor, powerful over subservient, educated over uneducated, outgoing over introverted, one race over another. While human nature leans toward partiality, the Bible presents God as impartial. His holy character is devoid of selfishly motivated favoritism.

This was evident in the Lord's response to Salome. Rather than grant Salome's request that He show partiality to her sons, Jesus directed her and the others toward a greater pursuit than power or status—the high calling of serving Him and others. He pointed them to love, the character quality that overcomes status seeking. In short, the one close to the heart of the Lord would be, like Him, a suffering servant, focused on loving God and others at any cost.

Jesus' response to Salome was a picture of God's total resistance to partiality and favoritism. Even though James and John were closer to Jesus than others, He would treat no one as superior. In this the Son of God was reflecting God's character (Hebrews 1:3) and the character He wants to build into us.

How does partiality affect us, and how should we view prejudices in our own lives? In this lesson, we will study biblical truth regarding partiality and favoritism.

1. What are some results of partialities in families and social groups?

2. Had Jesus granted Salome's request, what would have been the result?

3. a. Salome was ambitious for her sons. In His response to Salome, what did Jesus say we should ambitiously pursue in order to be great in His Kingdom (Matthew 20:26-28)?

b. How does such a focus help overcome partialities?

4. a. How did Jesus' enemies describe Him in Mark 12:14a?

b. What do the following reveal about God regarding favoritism?

2 Chronicles 19:7

Mark 12:41-44

Ephesians 6:9

Acts 10:34-35

Romans 10:12-13

5. What principles of fairness and impartiality are found in the following passages?

Deuteronomy 16:19-20a

Psalm 82:3

Leviticus 19:15

James 2:1-5

6. a. How was Salome insensitive to the other disciples in what she asked of Jesus?

b. What did Jesus teach in Matthew 22:36-40 that can keep us from being insensitive others because of personal ambition?

7. Favoritism and partiality are often connected to our old selfish nature and impossible to overcome without God's help. How can we experience His power over self-centeredness?

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 4:22-24

Galatians 5:25 (16)

SUMMARY

8. What have you observed in Salome's life that you admire?

9. What focuses does God want you to have that overcome selfish ambition and partialities?

10. a. Is there a relationship in your life with a person or group where you struggle to be impartial? How do you think Jesus would be in this situation?

- b. What do you want God, through His Spirit, to produce in you as you daily give your life to Him? Make this your prayer.

LESSON 19 NOTES

1 *earthly kingdom*. When we think of Christ's kingdom today, we imagine a heavenly kingdom. But Salome did not. She expected, as did the others, that Jesus would soon exercise His power to establish an earthly kingdom. Politically speaking, Salome wanted her sons to be the new king's right-hand men. She did not realize that those closest to the Lord would be suffering servants as He was. James and John did in fact serve and suffer as Christ's disciples, as He set up His kingdom in men's hearts.

Prophecy did describe the Messiah (Christ) to be a reigning king, and, indeed, he will return as that one day (cf. Matthew 24-25). But they had overlooked the prophecy saying Christ would be a suffering redeemer of His people first (cf. Isaiah 53).

2 Reference: Note 2, *angels*, p. 215.

LESSON 20

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene was from the town of Magdala on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee, near Capernaum. She had met Jesus there, and He cast seven demonic spirits out of her. Demonic possession was prevalent at the time of Christ, and we don't know how these spirits made themselves manifest in Mary's life. But we can be sure everyone saw the profound change in her when she was set free from the dark world of Satan to walk in the light of God's own Son.

And Mary did walk with Jesus as He traveled from one town and village to another in Galilee "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). In her gratitude and love for the One who had set her free, Mary devoted herself to following Jesus no matter what the cost. She and several other women who had been cured of diseases or evil spirits traveled with Jesus and the disciples during the last year or more, providing for their needs out of their own means.

Mary witnessed many wonderful miracles of Jesus—healing the blind, the lame, lepers, and all manner of disease. He fed thousands from five loaves and two fish and even brought people back to life! Over and over she heard His teachings emphasizing faith and love as He declared truth about God's kingdom. She was awed by the Master's selfless and sinless life, feeling it a great privilege to know and be around a truly perfect Person who, in a fully right mind, claimed to be the Son of God.

Finally, Mary Magdalene made the difficult journey with Jesus and His disciples as they traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover where Jesus had

told them He would be arrested, killed and rise on the third day! He was so certain, but Mary could not comprehend these words. Then, sure enough, the nightmare unfolded. Was Mary in the crowd before Pilate that demanded Jesus' death, perhaps seeing the bloody scourging that left Him half-dead and unrecognizable? In overwhelming sorrow, she probably followed Jesus, as He attempted to carry His cross over the road to Calvary. We know for a fact Mary stood at the cross with Jesus' mother and John, staying beside Jesus through the torturous six hours until He died.

She must have yearned for Jesus to use His divine power to save Himself, only to recall His words of prophecy. He would die, but nothing ever seemed more wrong. He said He would come to life again; surely that was impossible if He did not save Himself now. Mary watched as they drove the spear in her Master's side. Then she followed as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus from the cross to the garden, prepared His body, and placed Him in the tomb (Luke 23:55).

We can only imagine what Mary did after this. But 36 hours later, early in the morning on the third day, Mary led a group of women taking spices to the tomb. As they walked, they wondered how they would roll away the huge stone that was guarded by fierce Roman soldiers. But they arrived to find, to their shock and amazement, the stone had been rolled away, and Jesus' body was gone!

Several different accounts are given of the discovery, but Mary is in all of them as the first to see the empty tomb. She ran to tell Peter and John, who came and saw the same thing. They went back puzzled and stunned, remembering Jesus' words that He would rise on the third day. Could it be?

But Mary Magdalene lingered, weeping because the Lord's body had been taken away. When she peered inside the tomb one more time, two angels asked her why she was crying. So overcome by grief that she was unaffected even by angels, she simply answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

Then Mary turned to face Jesus, whom she at first thought to be the gardener. That is, until He said her name, "Mary!" It was His voice; only Jesus said her name like that. It was Him! He was alive! With what

must have been overwhelming joy, she cried, “Rabboni!” (This is Aramaic for master or teacher.) Jesus told her not to cling to Him, but to go and tell the disciples He would come to them. Mary went immediately to declare, “I have seen the Lord!”

Most likely, Mary was in the room with other disciples when Jesus appeared in their midst to say, “Peace be with you!” and to show them the scars in His hands, side and feet. Most likely, Mary was there forty days later on the hill near Bethany when Jesus blessed the disciples and ascended into heaven. Then, she listened as an angel declared He would return one day in the same way He had left.

Most likely, she was there almost 50 days later on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to indwell the believers’ hearts. Most likely that very day Mary heard Peter stand before the crowds in Jerusalem to declare the gospel boldly, leading 3,000 to believe and be baptized (Acts 2:41).

We are told no more about Mary Magdalene’s life, but it was a privileged one to be sure. She is an everlasting picture of the power of Christ to take a seemingly hopeless and broken life and make it whole and meaningful. She demonstrated courage and fortitude, unfailing love, humility and unselfish devotion to Christ. Mary served Jesus in life and remained faithful when the crowd turned against Him and left Him in the grave. But God didn’t overlook her amazing love, and she was the first to say, “I have seen the Lord!”

Read Selected Verses.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What are we told about Mary Magdalene’s experience with Jesus?
Luke 8:1-3

2. What were the results of demon possession in other people Jesus delivered?

Mark 5:2-5

Mark 9:17-18a

Reference: Note 4, *Satan, demons*, p. 158.

3. a. Mary had traveled with Jesus and the disciples during the last year and a half of His ministry, as popularity faded into grave opposition. In her absolute commitment to Christ, where was she during Jesus death on the cross?

John 19:25

b. Where did her devotion to Jesus lead her next?

Mark 15:46-47

4. What was Mary the first to discover?

Mark 16:1-9

Read John 20:1-18.

5. a. John tells us more of the story. After Peter and John came to the tomb and left puzzled, Mary stayed behind. Through her tears of deep grief and confusion, what amazing experience was Mary unmoved by?

John 20:12-13

b. Then what did she also miss?

John 20:14-15

6. a. What incredible surprise lifted her spirit to pure elation?

John 20:16-17

b. What did Mary immediately do?

John 20:18

7. What did Mary Magdalene no doubt also experience?

Luke 24:36

Luke 24:45-46

Luke 24:50-52

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

THE BEAUTY OF A THANKFUL HEART

The people of Jesus' day had various responses to Him. Some used Him, while others hoped He would become an earthly king who would provide riches, healing and freedom from human tyranny. Still others, including many religious leaders of the day, saw Jesus as a political threat, finally crucifying Him out of insecurity and jealousy.

Mary Magdalene simply responded to Jesus with a thankful heart. No doubt her response was a welcomed balm to the Savior's aching heart. Perhaps this is why she experienced the privilege of leading the other women believers and being the first to witness Jesus' glorious resurrection.

Today, there are still the same responses to God. Some pour out their hearts to Him in thanks, while others take daily blessings for granted and are quick to blame God for the difficulties or disappointments of a selfish and sinful world.

Like Mary Magdalene, those who cultivate a thankful heart toward God experience deep joy, regardless of circumstances. Truly, God rewards the thankful heart with the richest blessings a heavenly Father can bestow.

As we continue our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, we will look at the beauty of a thankful heart.

1. a. Why does it affect people positively when we thank them for services, thoughtfulness or gifts? Why is it right to thank them?

b. What feelings are evoked when appreciation is withheld or overlooked? What are the unspoken messages?

c. Why should we maintain a thankful heart toward God?

d. What is the unspoken message conveyed when we are not thankful?

2. a. Why was Mary Magdalene thankful to Jesus?

b. What could have been her response?

c. Compare the responses of the men in Luke 17:12-19?

3. a. What are some daily blessings of God we can easily take for granted?

b. According to the Bible, what are the costliest gifts God has given us?

John 3:16

Ephesians 1:7-8

2 Corinthians 5:17

4. Praise can show our thankfulness to God. Choose 10 reasons to thank the Lord from Psalm 145.

“Thank you, Lord, that you are...”

5. What did Mary's gratitude toward the Lord produce in her life? What are some of the things that a grateful heart toward God produces in our daily living?

6. What do these verses command us to do and why?

Psalm 100:2-5

7. a. When Jesus died and Mary did not understand, she might have felt betrayed by Jesus and become bitter. What did her thankful heart produce in her during this time of darkness?

b. What was Habakkuk's determination, and what were the results?

Habakkuk 3:17-19

8. What does a thankful heart during hard times reveal?

Hebrews 11:1, 6

9. If we could meet Mary today, of what would she surely testify?

1 Corinthians 15:57-58

10. What is the danger of an ungrateful heart toward God?

Romans 1:21 (also 22-32)

11. For this reason, what are we told to maintain in the midst of all circumstances?

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Philippians 4:6-7

Colossians 3:15-17

SUMMARY

12. What can prevent you from having a thankful heart toward God, and what are the dangers that may result?

13. What resulted from Mary's thankful heart toward the Lord?

14. What does Mary's experience during the time of Jesus' death show you about trusting the Lord in times of confusion and heartache? Why can you still be thankful in these times? How will your faith be rewarded?

15. What is your desire with regard to having a grateful heart? Perhaps you would like to make a moment to make this your prayer.

LESSON 21

SAPPHIRA

After Jesus ascended into heaven before their eyes, His followers obeyed His instructions to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came to indwell them. He would give them divine power to be witnesses to Jesus' resurrection and the message of salvation in Christ.

This miracle happened about seven weeks after Jesus' ascension, during the Jewish celebration of Pentecost when many thousands of Jews from around the Roman Empire had gathered in Jerusalem. The disciples were in an upper room praying when they heard a sound like the roaring of a big storm and saw tongues of fire over each head. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to praise God in languages unknown to them. When they went outside and began to tell people in the streets about Christ, people heard their words in their own languages. Peter stood up with the other apostles, and the Holy Spirit enabled him to preach fearlessly to the enormous crowd, telling them about the risen Lord Jesus Christ and their need to repent and believe in Him. As a result, 3,000 new believers were baptized that day (Acts 2:14f).

With this, the church was born and began joyfully meeting at the Temple on the first day of the week. They shared a mutual love and fellowship and gave freely to meet each other's needs. Peter and John and the other apostles were empowered to work miracles of healing and preach the gospel in spite of grave threats from Jewish authorities.

Some believers voluntarily sold things they owned to meet the needs of the poor among them. After a godly man named Barnabas sold some

property and gave all the proceeds to the church, a couple named Ananias and *Sapphira* decided to do the same. Only they decided to lie and say they were giving all the money, when in fact they kept some of the proceeds for themselves. Peter somehow found out they were lying and one at a time brought Ananias and Sapphira before him to give them a chance to tell the truth to him and to God. When Ananias chose to lie again, Peter in essence said, “Why do you lie to us and to God? The money was yours. You could have kept some or all of it.” Immediately Ananias fell dead and was taken away to be buried.

When Sapphira came about three hours later, not knowing what had happened to her husband, Peter gave her the same chance to tell the truth. Instead, Sapphira, who had agreed with her husband to lie, said, “Yes, we gave you all the money for the sale of the property.” Then Peter asked Sapphira why she would lie to God, and she fell dead. They buried her next to Ananias.

As news spread about this, a sense of God’s awesome presence in the fledgling church and the seriousness of sin seized everyone. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders, and more and more people believed in the Lord and were added to their numbers (Acts 5:14).

Read Acts 2:38-47.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. What was Peter’s message to the thousands of people gathered to hear his words (2:38)?

- b. What was the result of that gathering on the day of Pentacost (2:41-47)?

Read Acts 4:36-5:11.

2. a. What did Barnabas do that inspired Ananias and Sapphira to do the same (4:36-5:1)?

b. What did Ananias do that Sapphira agreed with (5:2)?

3. a. Who did Peter say motivated Ananias and Sapphira to lie about their giving, and to whom did he say they lied (5:3)?

References: Note 1, *Satan has so filled your heart*, and Note 2, *Ananias and Sapphira*, p. 206.

b. What did Peter say this couple was free to honestly do (5:4)?

4. What gripping event took place as a result of Ananias' lie (5:5-6)?

5. Even though she had been deceptive along with her husband, what opportunity did Peter give Sapphira (5:7-8a)?

6. Peter himself had experienced failure before the Lord. Certainly he grieved for this couple. What did Peter have to tell Sapphira (5:8b-10)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

DEFEATING HYPOCRISY

Sapphira, like most of us, wanted to be praised by other people. It was important to her and her husband to be seen as concerned and sacrificially giving people. But their own welfare and reputation was clearly the center of their lives. While they pretended to give God and others their all, their fraudulent gift became a sacrilege.

It is dangerous to make what other people think of us the center of our lives. In fact, when it comes to our relationship to God, any focus that puts Him in second place gives Satan opportunity to trap us in religious hypocrisy. Hypocrisy in the spiritual realm amounts to trying to make ourselves appear godly while actually practicing ungodliness.

The sad fact is, the hypocrite is often blinded to his own desperate state and unaware that his game is obvious to others. People instinctively pick up on hypocrisy in others. A profound law of the universe is that the lie seeks to reveal itself.

Because of this, many of us have heard someone say, "I don't believe in God because of all the hypocrites in the church." Many people are turned away from the Christian faith because there is a lack of integrity and Christ-centeredness in the lives of the believers they know. The duplicity in the lives of professed Christians becomes poison to the cause of Christ. Not only this, but hypocrisy can make God appear uninvolved, unjust or non-existent because He does nothing to deal with it.

God knows the destructive power of hypocrisy, and throughout history has often publicly exposed the person, especially a church leader, who pretends to be holy while practicing ungodliness. God could not allow hypocrisy to exist in the fledgling early church.

Hypocrisy develops subtly, but we can detect and defeat it in our lives. In this lesson, we will look at some roots of hypocrisy and how to face the challenge of living an authentic Christian life.

1. What motivations might have caused Sapphira to become subject to hypocrisy?

2. a. What are some examples of hypocritical behavior in professed Christians today?

b. What are the motivations behind these behaviors?

c. What can become more important to us than God (think about your own life)? How can putting these people or things before God lead us to become hypocritical in our spiritual lives?

3. How does Jesus define hypocrisy in these passages?

Matthew 23:3c

Luke 6:46 (James 1:22-24)

4. What causes for hypocrisy are referred to in the following?

Psalm 36:2

Matthew 6:24

1 John 2:9-11

5. Hypocrisy often comes from seeking honor and attention for ourselves. What does the Bible warn about self-exaltation in Proverbs 16:18?

6. The reason hypocrisy is so serious is because it mocks God and hurts the cause of truth (cf. 2 Peter 2:2; Nehemiah 5:9). Ananias and Sapphira's lie not only mocked the holiness of God but also jeopardized the life of the Christian church in its infancy. God's action with this couple was protective of the greater body of faithful believers. What do the following verses reveal about God's character that were proven in His dealings with Ananias and Sapphira?

Psalm 101:7

Daniel 2:22

7. What must we realize about God that will motivate us to avoid hypocrisy in our lives?

Psalm 69:5

Proverbs 16:2

Galatians 6:7

8. What does God do when we are honest about our hypocrisy?

Psalm 32:5

9. How can we avoid hypocrisy in our lives?

Proverbs 11:3

Matthew 22:37-40

James 1:25 (cf. 23-24)

Galatians 5:16, 25

10. What must be our continual prayer?

Psalm 139:23-24

SUMMARY

11. Anyone can fall into hypocritical practices as a Christian. What truths about God's holy character motivate you to maintain an honest relationship with Him?

12. While none of us will achieve perfection as Christians, what can ensure your integrity as a believer?

13. As you reflect on the roots and results of hypocrisy, what is your desire regarding Christian integrity? Make this a prayer.

LESSON 21 NOTES

1 *Satan has so filled your heart* (Acts 5:3). Jesus described Satan as “the father of lies” (John 8:44), and his activity in the situation was clear and noted. See also Note 3, *Satan, demons*, p. 157.

2 *Ananias and Sapphira* were given as bad examples of sharing. Love of praise for pretended generosity and love for money led to the first recorded sin in the life of the church. It is a warning to the readers that “God cannot be mocked” (Galatians 6:7). They had a right to keep back whatever they chose, but to make it appear that they had given all when they had not was sinful. “They had lied to the Holy Spirit, regarded as God Himself present with His people. If no dire consequences had followed this act of sin, the results among the believers would have been serious when the deceit became known. Not only would dishonesty appear profitable, but the conclusion that the Spirit could be deceived would follow. It was important to set the course properly at the outset in order to leave no doubt that God will not tolerate such hypocrisy and deceit.” *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 1651-1652.

LESSON 22

MARY OF JERUSALEM

At the beginning of Acts, we are told of a large room in a certain home in Jerusalem that followers of Christ met in, awaiting His promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell their lives and give them power to be His witnesses. This home, perhaps also used for the last supper of Jesus and His twelve disciples, is thought to have belonged to a woman named *Mary*. She is the mother of John Mark, who traveled with the apostle Paul and Barnabas on missionary journeys and wrote the Gospel of Mark. Mary is mentioned by name only once in Acts 12:12; "... he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying."

This was the story of Peter's deliverance by an angel out of prison. As the chief leader of the early Christians, Herod Agrippa locked Peter in prison, chained between two guards. Herod had recently killed the apostle James, and when he saw it pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter. The apostle was awaiting trial the next day before Jewish authorities who yearned to execute the leader of the Christian movement. Humanly speaking, nothing could save Peter. Believers gathered to pray all night, asking God to supernaturally save Peter's life.

The Lord heard their prayers and was also not ready for Peter's death. During the night, He sent an angel, who put the guards in a deep sleep, released Peter's chains, opened the prison door and led Peter to the street. When Peter realized he wasn't just dreaming, he made his way to the home of Mary (of Jerusalem) where the believers were praying, let them know of the miracle, and left for a safe place. The next day Herod and all were baffled when Peter was simply gone.

Mary of Jerusalem was a courageous servant who continually opened her home as a meeting place for believers in the early church. Her sacrificial work of hospitality no doubt kept her close to awesome events and the godliest of believers and the Lord. To get a picture of this, we will look at the amazing story of Peter and those who prayed for him in Acts 12.

Read Acts 12:1-19a.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. a. Who began to persecute the Christians, and what did he do (12:1-4)?

Reference: Note 1, *King Herod*, p. 214.

b. What was the situation that night (12:5-6)?

2. a. How was Peter released from his cell (12:7-9)?

Reference: Note 2, *angels*, p. 215.

b. What happened before Peter realized he was not seeing a vision (12:10-11)?

3. The believers at Mary's home were gathered to pray. What happened in answer to their prayers for Peter (12:12-17)?

Reference: Note 3, *Mary's home*, p. 215.

Note: James (v. 17) is the Lord's brother, a leader in the Jerusalem church (Galatians 1:19). James, the brother of John, had already been killed.

4. In spite of the persecution, what continued to happen (12:24)?

5. Who did Mary say goodbye to as he left with his cousin Barnabas and the apostle Paul for Antioch (12:25)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

GIVING LIVING

It certainly could be said that Mary of Jerusalem was a giving person. She gave her home to God, her son to God's service and her time to prayer and hospitality. There were great risks involved in her life of sacrifice, particularly in a time when professing Christians could face imprisonment or death for their faith. Even so, Mary gave herself completely to the needs of others and courageously submitted to the Lord's purposes for her and her family.

While it may at times seem unreasonable or frightening to avail ourselves to God and others, the Bible promises abundant blessings for "giving living." Indeed, the Scriptures promise that the more we give, the more we receive. Indeed, we cannot outgive the Lord.

Jesus said that as we die to a lifestyle focused on selfish desires, we actually find life and are able to give life to others (John 12:24-25). He promises a full and meaningful life to the woman who lets Him live His life through her (John 10:10b). No doubt Mary experienced this truth and would have had it no other way.

In this study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*, we'll look at the practice of "giving living."

1. a. What are some attitudes that keep people from experiencing the rewards of generosity?

b. Of what does the Bible assure us when we practice generosity with our time, talent and treasure?

Proverbs 11:25

2 Corinthians 9:6

c. How have you observed these truths in the life of a generous person you know? Have you experienced these rewards of giving yourself?

Giving of Time and Possessions to God

2. What do these verses instruct or suggest about giving of our time, homes or possessions?

Romans 12:13

1 Peter 4:9

I Timothy 6:17-19

3. What attitudes did Mary's service and generosity require of her? What do the following suggest?

Matthew 25:34-40 (Christ speaking)

Philippians 2:3-4

Colossians 3:23-24

4. What blessings did Mary experience as a result of her hospitality? What can we expect when we dedicate our homes to the Lord and make ourselves available for hospitality?

Giving Our Children to God

5. Mary's son, John Mark, took a treacherous first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas, and later did missionary work with Barnabas alone. Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark, was called a "son" by the Apostle Peter (I Peter 5:13), and was sent for by the Apostle Paul in his last days on earth. Mark was a key evangelist in a time of serious Christian persecution.

Even so, what does the following suggest to have been Mary's experience regarding her son Mark?

Proverbs 23:24

6. What did Jesus teach as the most secure path for our children to take?

Matthew 6:31-33

7. If we are parents, what does the Bible tell us to do to ensure our children's best?

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (Proverbs 22:6)

Proverbs 14:26

Note: *Fear of the Lord* means awe and reverent trust in God.

8. What blessings do you think Mary experienced as a result of entrusting her son to the Lord?

Giving Our Time to Prayer

9. What are we instructed to do regarding prayer?

Luke 11:9-10

Philippians 4:6

Colossians 4:2

10. What does God promise when we pray, which was depicted by Peter's miraculous escape from prison?

Psalm 91:15

Jeremiah 33:3

11. What rewards do you expect Mary experienced because she gave her time to prayer?

SUMMARY

12. a. Mary's life was greatly enriched because of her choices to give of her time, treasure and talent to the Lord and others. What does the Lord promise when we are generous with Him and others?

Luke 6:38

b.. What are the benefits of "giving living" as opposed to living simply to please yourself?

13. We all don't have the same gifts or resources. What are some ways that you can give to the Lord and others?

14. a. What are the hard choices required to practice a lifestyle of generosity? What, if anything, has hindered your generosity with the Lord and others?

b. What do you want the Holy Spirit to enable you to do as a result of this study?

LESSON 22 NOTES

1 *King Herod* (Acts 12) or *Agrippa I* was the nephew of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-12) and tried Jesus. Agrippa I was also the grandson of Herod the Great, a ruthless man

who murdered his wife, three sons, many relatives and numbers of others, including the babies in Bethlehem at Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:16). The King Herod in Acts, ruled over Samaria, Judea and some other territories until his death in 44 A.D. recorded in Acts 12.

2 *Angels* (Psalm 34:7). According to the Bible, angels surround us continually. They are created immortal beings who serve God and believers. An angel is physically powerful; for example, one angel effortlessly moved the huge stone from the tomb of Jesus, a stone three men would struggle to displace. An angel closed the mouth of the lions in Daniel 6:22. Angels are usually invisible to our eyes, but they can become visible (ex.: Genesis 16:7; Numbers 22:23; Luke 1:28). When angels do appear, they are usually glorious and stunningly beautiful so as to cause amazement in those who witness their presence (Luke 1:11; Matthew 28:2-3; Daniel 10:6; Revelation 10:1). 2 Corinthians 11:14 states that Satan can make himself appear as an angel of God. "Whether visible or invisible, however, God causes his angels to go before us, to be with us, and to follow after us. All of this can be fully understood only by believers who know that angelic presences are in control of the battlefield about us, so that we may stand (Isaiah 26:3) with complete confidence in the midst of the fight." Billy Graham, *Angels, God's Secret Agents*, p. 45.

"Though we know only three [angels] by name—Michael, Gabriel and Satan—the Bible refers to numerous ranks and divisions. Satan is the leader of the company of evil angels while good angels are under the authority of God.

Angels, like human beings, have been created to serve their Creator. They have many duties: (a) to praise and worship God; (b) to bring messages from God to mankind; (c) to protect God's people; (d) to carry out God's will; and (e) to punish God's enemies, including Satan." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 1367. See also, Note 4, *Satan, demons*, p. 158.

3 *Mary's home* (Acts 12:12). This Mary was John Mark's mother and Barnabas' aunt (Mark and Barnabas were cousins--Colossians 4:10). Apparently her home was a gathering place for Christians. It may have been the location of the upper room where the Last Supper was held (Mark 14:13-15; Acts 1:13) and the place of prayer in Acts 4:31. *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1667. Mary's son, John Mark, wrote the Gospel of Mark and accompanied Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey.

LESSON 23

PHOEBE

A major event in the early church was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, later known as the Apostle Paul. A rising star among Jerusalem Pharisees, Paul made it his mission to silence the “Way,” as the new sect of Judaism was called. But when Paul was en route to Damascus to arrest believers there, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ actually appeared to Paul and charged him to take the gospel¹ of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9).

After some years of the Holy Spirit adjusting Paul’s understanding of the Scriptures to the truth of Jesus Christ, Paul completed three missionary journeys. These spread the gospel across the Roman Empire. He also wrote letters to various churches that became Scriptures of the New Testament.

One of these letters was what we know as the book of Romans. Paul was probably in Corinth or nearby Cenchrea on his third missionary journey when he wrote to the believers in Rome to prepare them for his visit. As Paul put this masterpiece in the hands of a trusted believer, a single woman named *Phoebe*, to transport to Rome, they could not have imagined the impact the letter would have on the world. The Book of Romans is considered by many to be the watershed of all Scripture, influenced the conversions of men like Augustine, Luther, and Wesley, and since its writing has explained God’s plan of salvation to multiplied millions the world over.

We can also be sure that Phoebe, whom God trusted to carry this precious piece of literature to Rome, had been taught its contents as she

sat under the teaching of Paul. She well could have memorized the letter on the journey to Rome. At any rate, to understand the contents of this letter would be to understand the beliefs of this godly woman.

Phoebe's name means "pure" or "radiant as the moon." We only have the mention of her name and service in Romans 16:1-2, where Paul calls her a "sister" in the Lord. We don't know how or when Phoebe became a Christian, but Paul testifies to her love and service among believers. The original language points to her being a deaconess and a teacher of women who also ministered to the poor in the church at Cenchrea. Paul also called her a "helper" or *prostatis*, meaning "one who stands by in case of need." This classical Greek word described a trainer in the Olympic games who stood by the athletes to see that they were properly trained. This depicts Phoebe as one who stood by others, including Paul, unselfishly and liberally helping them to succeed.

Though briefly mentioned, Phoebe is highlighted in God's Word as a godly single woman who accomplished more than she could even dream of in her devotion to Jesus Christ.

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. What did Paul tell us about Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2?

Note: *sister* in the family of God, made up of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12).

2. It is believed that Phoebe carried the letter, known as the book of Romans in the New Testament, to the church in Rome. What teachings of this book would have been foundations of Phoebe's faith?

Romans 1:16

Romans 3:22-24

References: Note 2, *Justified*, and Note 3, *Redemption*, p. 225.

Romans 6:3-4

Romans 5:1, 8:1

3. a. What keys to living the Christian life did Phoebe know through Paul's teaching?

Romans 8:5-6

Romans 8:13

Note: *die* refers to spiritual separation from God; *body* speaks of the old sinful nature. The *Holy Spirit* can give power to defeat sin and the old nature.

b. What truths did Paul teach Phoebe that give strength to persevere, especially in hard times?

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:31b-32

Romans 8:34-35, 38-39

4. Given Paul's commendation of Phoebe, how did she most assuredly live her life?

Romans 12:9-12

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

TO BE USED BY GOD

Like Mary of Jerusalem (Lesson 22), Phoebe was a woman who was greatly used by God because she availed herself completely to Him. As a believer in the Corinthian church at Cenchrea, Phoebe was known for her devotion to meeting the material and physical needs of poor and distressed people in her congregation. As a single woman, she gave herself wholeheartedly to God and His purposes and was no doubt challenged and fulfilled by the way He used her to bless others. The Pauline letter, generally believed to have been carried to Rome by Phoebe, would become known as the watershed of Scripture. Phoebe's faithfulness in little things made her trustworthy with this great responsibility.

Often we feel fulfillment will come when we experience a certain set of circumstances. The words "if only" and "should have" rob us of the ever-present possibilities God has for us today. We may feel like our lack of knowledge or our struggles in the Christian life disqualify us from being used by God in the lives of others. So we sit and wait for that day when we will feel "ready."

The truth is, God delights in using imperfect people at any place in life. In His eyes, each of His children is special and uniquely gifted. Through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within, God knows that He can empower us to do what we would never dream we were capable of doing. So the saying goes: "God does not need our ability, only our availability."

Phoebe found the satisfaction that comes from being in the center of God's will and using the unique gifts God had given her. Perhaps there were things she longed for, but she found the fullness of life available *in the present* by simply making herself available to God. As we near the close of our study on *The Challenges of Womanhood*, let's look at how we can experience this same fulfillment today.

1. What might have kept Phoebe from being used by God? What can keep us from being used by God today?

2. Some common obstacles to trusting God to use our lives include areas of sin, fears and a sense of inadequacy. How do the Scriptures instruct us to address:

a. sin in our lives?

1 John 1:9

b. our fears?

Joshua 1:9

Isaiah 41:10

c. a sense of inadequacy?

2 Corinthians 3:5-6a

2 Corinthians 9:8, 10-11

2 Corinthians 12:9

3. According to the following verses, how does God enable us to do His work?

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 3:16, 20

Philippians 2:13; 4:13

4. How do we begin to discover God's purposes for us as individuals?

John 15:5 (Jesus speaking)

Ephesians 5:18b

Reference: Note 4, *be filled with the Spirit*, p. 225.

5. The Bible teaches that God gives unique spiritual “gifts” or abilities to each one who receives Christ. What do the following say about these gifts?

Romans 12:6-8

I Peter 4:10

SUMMARY

6. a. What obstacles can keep you from being used by God to build His Kingdom?

b. How can these obstacles be overcome?

7. How does God empower us to be used to build His Kingdom?

8. Often you can identify the gift(s) God has given you by what motivates you to serve others. Although *not a comprehensive list*, the following may be helpful in identifying your spiritual gift(s).

- **Prophecy** - the motivation to reveal sinful motives or actions by presenting God's truth.
- **Serving** - the motivation to demonstrate love by meeting practical needs. (Hospitality or “helps” gifts included here.)
- **Teaching** - clarifying truth; the motivation to search out and validate truth which has been presented.
- **Exhortation or Encouragement** - the motivation to stimulate the faith of others. Sees steps for others to take to reach their potential.
- **Giving** - the motivation to entrust personal assets to others for the furtherance of their ministry.
- **Ruling or leadership** - the motivation to coordinate the activities of others for the achievement of common goals.
- **Showing mercy** - the motivation to identify with and comfort those who are in distress.

a. What spiritual gifts might Phoebe have had and used to build God’s Kingdom?

b. To what gifts/motivations can you best relate?

9. What natural talents (musical, artistic, writing, etc.) do you have that might be used by God to build His Kingdom? Have you devoted these to Him and asked His direction in using them?

10. In every season of life, God wants us to be fulfilled as He equips us to help others. If you have not made it a practice, you might want to begin praying the following daily prayer:

Lord, fill me with your Spirit today, and enable me to invest the gifts and resources you have given me for your glory, in Jesus' Name.

LESSON 23 NOTES

1 *gospel* is an Old English word that means "good news." It translates the Greek word euangelion (eu-, "good" and angelion, "message"). The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are called Gospels. These books are documentaries of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ written by contemporaries. "Gospel" is also used to simply refer to the "good news" about Jesus Christ; that through Him, one can know God personally and inherit eternal life (John 3:16; 14:6).

More specifically, the gospel message is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and now is able to save all who trust Him (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel was promised in the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 3:15, and touched on by Isaiah (Isaiah 1:18; 53; 55) and other prophets. Although promised by the prophets, they did not fully understand it (1 Peter 1:10-12). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man, born of a Jewish virgin in the line of David as prophesied (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25). Through His substitutionary death and victorious resurrection, Christ is able to give victory over sin and eternal life to all who believe.

2 *Justified* (Romans 5:1). *Justification* refers to God declaring us "not guilty" and righteous in his sight, even though we are guilty of sin. God is able to do this because of the life and death of Jesus Christ acting as man's substitute. When God declares a person righteous in His sight, He does so on the basis of the life and death of the One who was acting on his behalf. "Jesus our Lord...was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). When we put faith in Jesus Christ to save us from sin, God declares us justified, or not guilty, and righteous. We are justified by the death of Christ that paid the penalty for our sin, and we are justified by the life of Christ whose life of righteousness is also credited to us. This justification, which is all by God's grace and received by faith, brings us into fellowship with God as a child in His family. See also Note 3, *Redemption*, below.

3 *Redemption* is a biblical word meaning "to buy out" or "to set free by the payment of a price (ransom)" and refers to a slave being purchased out of slavery. Romans 3:24 says we are "justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus." As born sinners, we are in the slave market of sin, so to speak. But Christ, the only free man who ever lived (because He was sinless), paid the ransom price of His own blood to purchase sinners out of the slave market of sin and set them free to become sons of God. Only by the price of death can one be set free (Romans 6:23), and only one who is free (sinless as Christ was; cf. Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21) can buy a slave's freedom. By paying the ransom price of His shed blood, Jesus purchased the person who puts faith in Him out of the slave market of sin and sets him free to become a son of God (Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Gal 4:4-5). See also Note 2, *Justified*, above.

4 *be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18) does not refer to a quantity of the Spirit (like a glass needing to be filled as opposed to half-filled with water). The phrase refers to the continual choice we can make to allow the Holy Spirit to completely control our lives. Neither does the analogy with alcohol ("do not get drunk with wine") mean we get drunk with the Spirit in a way that we don't see, hear, feel or reason realistically or with self-control. The Holy Spirit produces the life of Christ in us, giving us godly perception, power, love, self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7) and the character qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23. See also, Notes 1-2, *Holy Spirit*, and *Works of the Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

LESSON 24

LOIS AND EUNICE

While the names of *Lois and Eunice* appear only once in the Bible; their noted faithfulness as mother and grandmother to Timothy set them firmly in the annals of history. Eunice, Timothy's mother, was Jewish, the daughter of Lois and an unnamed father. Eunice had married a Greek, and because nothing is said of him, it is assumed he was dead by the time Paul came to Lystra during his first missionary journey. Eunice and her mother, Lois, were probably won to Christ, along with Timothy, as Paul preached in their synagogue.

Eunice and Lois knew the Scriptures and had taught Timothy God's truth since he was an infant. Because of this, it was easy for Timothy to understand as Paul showed from the Scriptures that Jesus was the promised Messiah. After Timothy became a believer, he already had a depth of understanding in the Word of God that allowed him to be a teacher alongside Paul.

Paul recognized Timothy's potential when he visited Lystra during his second missionary journey and invited the young man to travel with him and Silas. Only one problem--all the Jews in the area knew Timothy had a Greek father and had not been circumcised. This would have been a major roadblock in evangelizing in Jewish synagogues where Paul always went first. Timothy's commitment was shown in that he was willing to be circumcised in order to serve the Lord with Paul.

Timothy completed the second missionary journey and continued on Paul's third journey as well. Later, Paul left this godly young man in

Ephesus to pastor the church that Paul had planted and nurtured for several years. After Paul was martyred by Nero around 65 A.D. and Jerusalem was desecrated in 70 A.D. by the Romans, Ephesus became the center for Christendom. Timothy must have been close to the last living apostle, John, who spent his later years living and ministering out of that city.

Without question, Paul had a deep love for Timothy, calling him, “my dear son” (2 Timothy 1:2). He wrote two letters to Timothy that later became New Testament Scripture. This young man, with whom Paul had prayed and served, rejoiced and suffered, laughed and cried, was without a doubt one of the apostle’s closest friends. Paul wrote his final words before his martyrdom to Timothy, longing to see Timothy one more time before he died (2 Timothy 4:6-9, 21).

We don’t know how much of Timothy’s service Eunice and Lois lived to see, but we can imagine there were many fears and fervent prayers, as well as much pride and joy, involved in seeing Timothy be so used of God. From Paul’s writings to Timothy, we learn of the character these women had built into their son and grandson. As one author stated:

“Eunice and Lois had sent forth their son Timothy, a man of eminent unselfishness, one who had the capacity for generous devotion, one who was warmhearted and loyal, one with charm and gentleness, one who had tenderness and patience, and one who was willing to sacrifice himself without reservation to the cause of Christ. These were qualities such as only a consecrated mother and grandmother could bestow upon a son.”¹

(Take a moment to locate this woman on the Timeline, page 4.)

1. How do we see the love of Paul for Timothy as he writes from the dungeon in Rome just before his death?

2 Timothy 1:2-4

2. How did Paul describe Timothy's faithfulness and its roots?

2 Timothy 1:5

3. a. How early did Eunice and Lois teach Timothy the Scriptures, and what did this teaching enable Timothy to do?

2 Timothy 3:14-15

b. How did Scripture teaching under Lois and Eunice, and later Paul, equip Timothy to serve God and build His Kingdom?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Reference: Note 2, *God-breathed*, p. 234.

4. How did Timothy become a frontline worker with the Apostle Paul and Silas on the second and third missionary journeys?

Acts 16:1-3

Note: Timothy was circumcised so his work among the Jews would be more effective. Paul always preached Jesus Christ in the Jewish synagogue first when he came to a new city.

5. a. What did Paul know as he wrote his second letter to Timothy?

2 Timothy 4:7-8

b. Not knowing how much longer he would wait before Nero ordered his death, what did Paul ask of Timothy?

2 Timothy 4:9, 13

6. a. What did Paul instruct Timothy to do that the apostle had done countless times in front of him?

2 Timothy 2:1-3

b. Lois and Eunice had also done this as they disciplined their son and grandson. What can we learn from them concerning teaching the Word of God?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

FAITH THAT OUTLIVES OUR OWN

The spiritual truth exemplified by Lois and Eunice is that when we live and impart a life of sincere faith, there will be far-reaching ripple effect into future generations. To live an authentic Christian life, therefore, is our greatest privilege and the most important thing we can do with our lifetime on earth. As we bring our study of *The Challenges of Womanhood* to a close, let's review a few of the everyday ways we can be assured of leaving a legacy of faith for those who come after us.

1. a. On what do we tend to focus our energies from day to day?

b. How might a daily reminder of the spiritual legacy we are leaving behind affect our priorities and actions?

2. What daily decisions must be predominant in order to have a positive spiritual impact on future generations? What do the following suggest?

Deuteronomy 6:5

Psalm 119:36-37

Matthew 6:31-33

3. a. What is the increasing result of putting Christ first and experiencing His love?

Ephesians 3:16-19

Galatians 5:22-23

b. What spiritual impact does God want us to have on those around us and on future generations? What do the following suggest?

2 Corinthians 2:14

Matthew 5:13a, 14a, 16

4. The faithful women we have studied in *The Challenges of Womanhood* encouraged the believers around them. Our encouragement of others can increase the spiritual legacy they leave behind. What is our role among believers, as suggested by the following?

I Peter 1:22

I Thessalonians 5:14-15

Hebrews 3:13

5. a. What does the Lord Jesus continually do for us that we are instructed to do for others?

Romans 8:34

I Timothy 2:1

b. What do these verses reveal about the power of our intercessory prayers for others?

James 5:16

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (prayer being one of our spiritual "weapons")

c. How can intercessory prayer impact the spiritual legacy we leave behind?

SUMMARY

6. a. What are some things the faithful women in our study had in common as they left a positive spiritual legacy—women like Ruth, Mary Magdalene, Phoebe, Eunice and Lois?

b. These faithful women were also imperfect. How does this truth encourage you?

7. What did ungodly women teach you about our choice of pursuits in life—women like Delilah, Jezebel and Herodias?

8. a. As you think about these godly and ungodly women, what contrasting words come to mind to describe their lives?

b. These contrasts describe the ripple effect each of us as women can have on the future. As you look at these words, describe the legacy you want to leave for those after you.

c. What can you do to have this kind of legacy?

9. What has been most helpful to you in this study of *The Challenges of Womanhood*? Are there particular verses or lessons that have spoken to you?

10. The women of our study spanned 2200 years of Israel's history, from the time of Abraham through the time of the apostle Paul. During this period, God systematically unfolded His plan of salvation, finally accomplished through the cross and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Has this overview of biblical history been significant to you as you studied these women of the Bible? If so, how? (See also, Timetable, p. 4-5.)

Perhaps you would like to take a moment to thank God for what He has taught you through this study.

LESSON 24 NOTES

1 Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 240.

2 *God-breathed* 2 Timothy 3:16. "Paul affirms God's active involvement in the writing of Scripture, as involvement so powerful and pervasive that what is written is the infallible and authoritative word of God."

2 Peter 1:20-21 states this as it says, "...no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." To be *carried along by the Holy Spirit* means that "in the production of Scripture both God and man were active participants. God was the source of the content of Scripture, so that what it says is what God has said. But the human author also actively spoke; he was more than a recorder. Yet what he said came from God. Although actively speaking, he was carried along by the Holy Spirit." *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 1846, 1900.

*MAJOR FOOTNOTES DIRECTORY

Lesson	Page	Note & Topic
3	37	2 Receive Christ.
5	54	1 Circumcision.
8	80	2 Baal and Ashtoreth, Asherah.
	81	3 Judges. 4 YHWH, LORD.
9	91	2 Samson "typifies the nation of Israel."
10	99	1 Levirate marriage.
12	116	2 kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 2:20).
13	127	1 Theocracy. 3 Ark of the Lord's covenant.
15	146	1 Holy Spirit. 2 Works of the Holy Spirit. 3 <i>blood of Jesus...purifies us</i> (1:7).
16	158	4 Satan, demons.
18	178	4 False guilt.
	179	"True Guilt vs. False Guilt Chart," Lois Walfrid.
22	215	2 Angels.
23	224	1 Gospel.
	225	2 Justified (Romans 5:1). 3 Redemption 4 <i>be filled with the Spirit</i> (Ephesians 5:18).
24	234	2 God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

*All footnotes are not listed on this page--only major theological notes for easy reference.

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