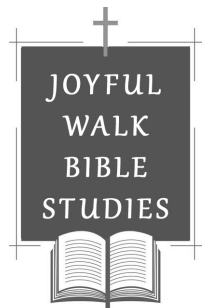


Everyday Women *Ever-Faithful God*

“Join Old Testament Women on Their
Walk from Fear to Faith”

MELANIE NEWTON



We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many women who served as editors for this study guide—especially Brenda Sharp, Joye Messerli, and Michelle Burns. Without your help, we would never have accomplished this monumental task in a timely manner. Thanks also to the Thursday morning Bible class from RockPointe Church in Flower Mound whose insights helped me to make needed updates to the original study.

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Melanie Newton is the author of “Graceful Beginnings” books for anyone new to the Bible and “Joyful Walk Bible Studies” for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. For questions about the use of this study guide, please visit melanienewton.com to contact us.

Joyful Walk Bible Studies are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format. We pray that you and your group will find *Everyday Women, Ever-Faithful God* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

Christ-focused • Bible-rich • Grace-based



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Melanie Newton

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is a speaker, author, and trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

"Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I've been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I've learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I've discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I'm still seeking that joyful walk every day..."

Melanie

Other Bible Studies by Melanie Newton

Graceful Beginnings Series books for new-to-the-Bible Christians:

A Fresh Start (basics for new Christians)
Painting the Portrait of Jesus (the Gospel of John)
The God You Can Know (the character of God)
Grace Overflowing (an overview of Paul's 13 letters)
The Walk from Fear to Faith (7 Old Testament women)
Satisfied by His Love (women who knew Jesus)
Seek the Treasure (study of Ephesians)
Pathways to a Joyful Walk (6 pathways to a joy-filled life)

Joyful Walk Bible Studies for growing Christians:

Graceful Living (the essentials for a grace-based Christian life)
Everyday Women, Ever Faithful God (Old Testament women, also in Spanish)
Profiles of Perseverance (Old Testament men, also in Spanish)
Reboot, Renew, Rejoice (1 and 2 Chronicles)
Identity: Sticking to Your Faith in a Pull-Apart World (Ezra thru Malachi)
Live Out His Love (New Testament women)
Heartbreak to Hope (the Gospel of Mark)
Radical Acts (Acts)
The God-Dependent Woman (2 Corinthians)
Knowing Jesus, Knowing Joy (Philippians, also in Spanish)
Healthy Living (Colossians and Philemon)
Adorn Yourself with Godliness (1 Timothy and Titus, also in Spanish)
Perspective (1 and 2 Thessalonians)
To Be Found Faithful (2 Timothy)
Connecting Faith to Life on Planet Earth (Genesis 1-11; Revelation)
Graceful Living Today (a devotional journal for a joyful life)

Resources for leading others

Be a Christ-Focused Small Group Leader
Leap into Lifestyle Disciplemaking
Bible Study Leadership Made Easy (online video course)

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Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 11 lessons arranged chronologically according to Old Testament history. For those who are not familiar with the history of Israel found in the Old Testament, each lesson begins with a brief history of a particular time period and then covers the lives of 1-2 women who lived during that time.

The lessons are divided into 5 sections (about 20 minutes in length). The first 3 sections contain a detail study of the passages. The fourth section asks you to reflect on what you've learned. The last section is a podcast that provides additional insight to the lesson. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage being covered.

The Basic Study

Each lesson includes core questions covering the narrative associated with the lives of 1-2 women. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is basically answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (**Observation**: what's actually there)
- What does it mean? (**Interpretation**: the author's intended meaning)
- How does this apply to me today? (**Application**: making it personal) **Your Life's Journey** questions lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life.

Study Enhancements

Deeper Discoveries (optional): Embedded within the sections are *optional* questions for further research of subjects we don't have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that may enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your "discoveries."

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Hebrew (definitions of Hebrew words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

Tell Your Story

This study is about the faith walk of women—those who lived in years past and those who live in the present. The scripture passages tell each Old Testament woman's "story" about her trust in God's faithfulness and goodness. Through **TELL YOUR STORY** questions in each lesson, you will be encouraged to write parts of your own story that relate to what's learned in the lesson. At the end of the study, you'll have enough information to put together a "My Story" of your own faith walk with God—especially your walk from fear to faith.

Podcasts

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at melanienewton.com/podcasts (choose "1: Everyday Women, The Walk from Fear to Faith"). Or, follow the links in the PDF version to

access the podcast for each lesson. Listen to the first podcast as an introduction to the study.

Old Testament Summary

About 1700 years after God created everything, He sent judgment on a rebellious race through a worldwide Flood. He later separated the nations with different languages and scattered them from Babel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were founding fathers of the Hebrew people. Sold into slavery, Joseph became a powerful foreign leader. The Israelites grew in number for ~400 years in Egypt. Then God delivered them from bondage through Moses who took the people across the Red Sea and taught them God's Law at Mt. Sinai. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land after a 40-year trek in the wilderness because of unbelief.

During the transition toward monarchy, there were deliverer-rulers called "Judges," the last of whom was Samuel. The first three Hebrew kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—each ruled 40 years. Under Rehoboam, the Hebrew nation divided into northern and southern kingdoms, respectively called Israel and Judah. Prophets warned against worshipping the foreign god Baal. After the reign of 19 wicked kings in the north, Assyria conquered and scattered the northern kingdom. In the south, 20 kings ruled for ~350 years, until Babylon took the people into captivity for 70 years. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led the Jews back into Jerusalem over a 100-year period. More than 400 "silent years" spanned the gap between Malachi and Matthew.

The 39 books in the Old Testament are divided into 4 main categories:

- "The LAW" (5 books)—the beginning of the nation of Israel as God's chosen people; God giving His Laws to the people that made them distinct from the rest of the nations.
- "HISTORY" (12 books)—narratives that reveal what happened from the time the people entered the Promised Land right after Moses died until 400 years before Christ was born.
- "POETRY & WISDOM" (5 books)—take place at the same time as the history books but are set apart because they are written as poems and have a lot of wise teaching in them.
- "PROPHETS" (17 books)—concurrent with the books of history and, except for Lamentations, reflect the name of the prophet through whom God spoke to the nation of Israel.

Old Testament Timeline

Historical Period	Years B.C.	Woman Studied
The Patriarchs	2100 - 1800	Sarah
Israel in Egypt	1800 - 1450	Jochebed, Miriam
Exodus through Conquest of the Land	1450 - 1400	Miriam, Rahab
Time of the Judges	1400 – 1000	Deborah & Jael Naomi & Ruth Hannah & Mrs. Manoah
United Kingdom	1000 – 900	Abigail & Bathsheba
Divided Kingdom	900 – 722	Zarephath Widow & Prophet's Widow Woman of Shunem
Captivity and Restoration	609 – 400	Esther

Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith

This study examines the faith walk of women who lived in Old Testament days. Like many women today, you may have very little knowledge of the Old Testament. You might look at that half of your Bible and think, “What’s written in it happened so long ago—anywhere from 2-4 thousand years ago. What do those women have in common with *me*? They don’t live in *my* world. They seem just like names on a page.”

If you like to read biographies, doesn’t reading someone’s story make that person come alive for you? Or, you may have done genealogy work on your family tree. It can be great to find something to brag about. But, you can also find out some of your ancestors’ dark secrets and hardships. I don’t know about you, but I feel a connection to that great-great grandmother when I learn a little bit about her life. Hopefully, that’s what you will experience through this study.

These Old Testament women were **EVERYDAY WOMEN**, just like we are, with many of the same experiences and challenges that we have. We’ll see an **EVER-FAITHFUL GOD** in action—a faithful God whose character never changes. He’s as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to them. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can’t see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid. And, we are often afraid, aren’t we?

A few years ago, I heard Jill Briscoe say, “Women are a fear-driven, performance-oriented species.” I think she’s right. Fear is an ever-present emotion with us. Real fears and imagined fears. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? No! Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. Yet, fear can take root in us and cause us to give way to panic and hysteria. God knows this about us. When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do so is our **WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH**.

As we join these Old Testament women on their walk from fear to faith, we will see consistent truths that we can apply to our lives today in our faith walk...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

Your walk from fear to faith begins as you count on these truths and live each day believing they are true.

Your faith walk is your story, your biography of God’s faithfulness to you and your response back to Him. Each one of these women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over to millions of eager listeners. You’re going to get to know it as you get to know them. It’s a connection with real women, **EVERYDAY WOMEN**.

And, each one of you has a story. You will be given opportunities throughout the study to recall parts of your story, write about it, and share it with others. And, you’ll have more reason to praise our **EVER-FAITHFUL** God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years. It’s going to be a great journey. And, I’m so glad to be walking beside you!

Melanie Newton

Discussion Group Guidelines

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You'll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other's insights**. Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. ☺
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality**. Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith”](#) before doing this lesson to get some background for the whole study.

Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith

Many Christians today have very little knowledge of the Old Testament. That might your experience. Do you look at the front half of your Bible and think, “What’s written in it happened so long ago? What do those women have in common with me? They are just names on a page. They didn’t live in my world.” Is that how you feel?

- Studying Old Testament women is like reading biographies or doing genealogy work on your family tree. It makes that person come alive for you. It helps you to feel a connection to that great-great grandmother when you learn a little bit about her life.
- For some of the Old Testament women we’ll be studying together, their names will be familiar to you—such as Sarah, Miriam, and Rahab. Others are strangers to you.

Old Testament women were everyday women with fears like ours.

- These Old Testament women were everyday women, just like you and I are, with many of the same experiences and challenges that we have. They cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes. Some even had home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their kids, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. They all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day!
- At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged.
- These Old Testament women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They had to face invading enemies, sick husbands and children, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices.
- Their stories are just snippets of their biographies and have been preserved for us to get to know them. And through their stories, we get to know their God who is also our God.

The Old Testament God is the same ever-faithful God.

- As we study their lives, we’ll see an **EVER-FAITHFUL GOD** in action. He’s our faithful God whose character never changes.

- He's as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to those women. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can't see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid.

We can trust God with our fears.

- Fear is an ever-present emotion with us. Real fears and imagined fears. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? I don't think so.
- Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. Yet, sudden fear can cause us to be terrified. God knows this about us.
- The psalmist says in Psalm 56:3-4,

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid."

- When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do so is our walk from fear to faith.

Sharing your story of walking with your ever-faithful God from fear to faith.

- Each of those Old Testament women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over and over to millions of eager listeners. You might be surprised how many times the scriptures refer to them actually telling their story in one form or another. You're going to get to know it as you get to know them. It's a connection with real women, **everyday women**.
- Each one of you has a story. There will be opportunity throughout the study for you to recall parts of your story, write about it, and share it with others. That will give you more reason to praise your **ever-faithful** God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years.

It's going to be a great journey. And, I'm so glad to be walking beside you!

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" PSALM 56:3-4

The Gift of Fear

Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? No! Our faithful God understands this about us. He doesn't want us to stay there, disoriented and hopeless. He gives us the answer—Himself!

- 7

Notice that David doesn't write, "If I am afraid." He says, "**When** I am afraid." Fear will happen. We can let fear take root in us so that we give way to panic and hysteria. Does that ring any bells with you? Are you prone to hysterics? God knows this about us. When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do that is your walk from fear to faith.

Trusting a Faithful God

Since God understands the tendency to fear and panic in us, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write encouragement and instructions to women in 1 Peter 3:3-6.

3. Read 1 Peter 3:3-6. What does God consider of great worth in His sight (verse 4)?

Although the context of this passage is a marriage relationship, the principles apply to any woman's character ("inner self"), especially the qualities of a GENTLE and QUIET spirit that are precious in God's sight. These enable a woman to "do what is right and not give way to fear" (verse 6). But, you may be thinking, "How can that apply to me? I have a bubbly personality. I'm not naturally quiet." Before you start feeling put out about these words or afraid that you could never measure up to this, let's find out what "gentle" and "quiet" actually mean.

Scriptural Insight: "GENTLE" means "**controlled strength**." It does not mean passive, weak, or someone who cannot help herself. Picture a mother cradling a newborn. She has the physical strength to harm that child but doesn't because her strength is under control. If you are going to have a gentle spirit, what will you need? Strength under control. A woman with a gentle spirit has a humble heart that bows itself before God, recognizes God's dealings with her as good, and chooses not to be contentious or resistant against Him.

"QUIET" means "tranquility arising from within." It does not mean whisper, silent, or bland. "Quiet" includes the idea of causing no disturbance to others. Think how a woman's hysterics affect those around her—family, friends, and coworkers. A woman with a quiet spirit has an inner peace and calmness in the midst of any circumstances. We can have a tranquil spirit in the midst of chaos. See how it fits with the "strength under control" attitude?

Gentleness and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-23) in a believer's life and available to every Christian woman who desires them—that includes you and me! Now that you know the real meanings of these words, are you more likely to desire these qualities?

4. Why do you think these qualities in a woman would be so precious – of great worth – to God?

5. Read 1 Peter 3:5-6 written below and underline the three choices women can make, identified by (1), (2), and (3).

“For this is the way the holy women of the past who (1) put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you (2) do what is right and (3) do not give way to fear.”

Peter identifies these examples for us as “holy women of the past.” The word “holy” means set apart for God’s special use. These women are holy because they’ve learned to trust in God when they were afraid. As holy women, these women were beautiful in God’s eyes (regardless of their outward appearance, age or social status). This beauty attributed to them by God Himself was based on three choices they made (“used to make themselves beautiful”) that every woman can make today:

- Choice #1: You can put your hope in God—in God and His Word rather than the fickleness of ourselves or others.
- Choice #2: You can do what is right—according to God’s way of approaching life, not the world’s way, especially those cultural practices that go against God’s Word.
- Choice #3: You can choose to not give way to fear. Let’s examine this one more closely.

Choose to Not Give Way to Fear

What does that mean—not give way to fear? We know this: God is not saying, “Don’t ever feel fear.” God gave us the gift of fear as a normal human emotion designed to alert us to danger so we can take action against it. God is saying, “You don’t have to stay terrified and paralyzed by your fear.” We are to TRUST GOD—in whom we have put our hope and by whose Word we are taught to do what is right.

6. Have you ever felt terrified? How did you respond?

7. God says that having a gentle and quiet inner spirit will make it easier for us to not get so terrified and stay that way. What’s harder for God: rescuing us from desperate circumstances or developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit? Why?

Did you select the “developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?” I agree because it involves our cooperation! Is it too difficult for Him? No! But here’s the key: a humble, peaceful heart makes it easier for us to make that choice to trust in the faithfulness of God rather than the fickleness of ourselves or others when we are tempted to panic and succumb to hysteria.

We have a faithful God. That's not imaginary. In 1 Peter 3:5, Sarah represents several other everyday women who lived in Old Testament days who put their hope in God and found Him worthy of their trust. This was their walk from fear to faith. What is that? We'll find out in the Day Two Study.

Think About It: "When we experience anxiety or fear, the enemy can try to use it as an opportunity to make us feel guilt or shame. That's when we pause and ask God for help, knowing He understands and never condemns us." (Holley Gerth, "Fear Not," *Homelife Magazine*, March 2016)

8. **Your Life's Journey:** What might be holding you back from trusting God whenever you are afraid?

Day Two Study

The Walk from Fear to Faith

In the Bible, "walk" refers to following a certain course of life or conducting oneself in a certain way. It's your daily life. How you choose to live daily. What motivates you. What guides you. What decisions you make in how you will respond to life. Will your daily walk (life) follow God's way of approaching life or the world's way of approaching life (usually very different)? Your walk is your choice.

For the purposes of this study, your choice will involve moving away from fear and toward faith. Most of us have a pretty good understanding of fear in our lives. But, what is faith? God defines that for us Himself through the writer of Hebrews.

9. Read Hebrews 11:1 and 6.
- What is faith (v. 1)?
 - What must you believe about God in your faith (v. 6)?

Did you notice that faith is related to confidence? Confident hope and assurance that what we believe is true. Confidence that our God exists and is good to anyone who seeks Him. This confidence pleases Him. Hebrews 11 continues to relate the lives of men and women who had this confidence in God.

10. Read Hebrews 11:11, 23, and 31. Who chose faith in God over giving way to fear?

11. Read Hebrews 11:35 (first half of verse). By faith, what did these women receive?

Think About It: “When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We become people who feel, ‘I don’t know if that can work. I don’t know if I can get through this.’ When we look at the Scriptures and begin to...see how God empowered normal average people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and strengthens us and gives us courage that we didn’t know we had.”

These women are our examples of choosing faith in God over giving way to fear (1 Peter 3:5-6). By studying their lives, God’s Spirit will strengthen us and give us courage we didn’t know we had.

Connecting with Old Testament Everyday Women

If you have limited knowledge of the Old Testament, those women who lived so long ago may be strangers to you. Some you may have heard about—Sarah, Hannah, Abigail and Bathsheba. Everyone of Jewish birth can consider Sarah to be a great-great-grandmother. Others are unknown—Jael, Mrs. Manoah, and the Shunammite woman. Yet, they were still women like you and I are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes, including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day. ☺

At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They faced invading enemies, sick family members, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices. These were EVERYDAY WOMEN, just like we are.

12. As women in general, what kind of life experiences for them might have been the same as your own life experiences?

13. What kinds of fears did these women probably face that you also face?

Each one of these women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over to millions of eager listeners. You might be surprised how many times the scriptures refer to them actually telling their story to others around them. Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them, and to know their God who is also our God—an **EVER-FAITHFUL** God whose character never changes. He's as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to those women. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can't see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid.

14. Using a dictionary, write the definition of trust that fits best with the concept of trusting God.

Trusting an Ever-Faithful Personal God

Trust is usually defined as a firm belief in the character, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. In our walk from fear to faith, that trust is in God. As we study the lives of Sarah, Miriam, Rahab, and others, we'll see an ever-faithful personal God in action. These Old Testament women knew God by the personal name *Yahweh*. In our English translations, it is usually written as LORD in capital letters. In the Old Testament, you'll find the phrase "the LORD your God" or "the LORD our God" at least 500 times. Every time, that phrase is emphasizing, "We have a personal God. His name is *Yahweh*." It's the name by which God wished to be known and worshiped in Israel and by Israel. *Yahweh* means, "I am." This name expressed His character as constant, dependable and faithful.

Several times in the gospels, Jesus applied God's name "I am" to Himself (John 4:26; 8:58). So, the ever-faithful, promise-keeping God of the Old Testament is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament and forever. We still have a personal God.

15. Read John 14:27 and 16:33. What does Jesus promise to you?

Take heart! He is with you through any trouble. You can trust Him. Our God is trustworthy.

16. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Has there been a problem in your life where you needed to make a choice to do right, but the possible consequences filled you with fear? Have you learned to trust God and live by faith in that area, or are you still struggling with it?

Day Three Study – Four Truths Essential to Faith

As we join these Old Testament women on their faith walk, we will see consistent truths that we can apply to our lives today in our WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH.

Truth #1: God Loves You

17. Read the following verses. What do you learn about God's love for you?

- John 16:27 —
- Romans 5:5 —
- Ephesians 5:1 —

As a believer in Jesus, the Father Himself loves you. He pours out His love in your heart. You are one of His dearly loved children. You can count on Truth #1 — God loves you.

Truth #2: God Knows What Is Going on in Your Life

18. Read the following verses. What does God know about you?

- Matthew 6:25, 31-32 —
- Psalm 139:1-10 —

God is everywhere and knows everything. That's part of His character. He knows what is going on in your life and my life. If He doesn't, then He isn't really God. He knows how best to meet your needs, how to get you through anything. It is a given. You can count on Truth #2 — God knows what is going on in your life.

Truth #3: God Can Do Something About It

19. Read the following verses: What does the angel say to each woman about God's power?

- Genesis 18:14 —
- Luke 1:37 —

Since the angel lives in heaven with God, he should know. So, is anything impossible for the Lord? The answer is, NO! Notice that both of these often-quoted statements are made to women concerning the deepest hurt a woman could experience at that time—barrenness. What is the deepest hurt you can experience in your culture? Your God can do something about that, too.

Jesus said to the men and women following Him, “All things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27) Our God is all-powerful. He is capable of doing anything He chooses to do that is in agreement with His character and His will. We can count on Truth #3 — God can do something about it. Whatever IT is.

Truth #4: You Can Trust His Goodness In Whatever He Chooses To Do

This is the sticky part, isn't it? Is God good? Can I believe that He is good all the time?

The day before my dear friend died of breast cancer, she softly spoke to me these words, “God is good.” I finished her sentence with “all the time” because I had heard her say that repeatedly. She replied, “I don't understand all of this.” And, most of the time, we can't understand. But, we've got to bank on God's goodness.

20. Read Psalm 119:68. What is declared about God?

21. Read Proverbs 3:5. What wisdom is given to us?

God is good all the time. That's a fact. What He does is always good. As we study each of these women, we'll see that during her faith walk, a loving God said “no” to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You can do the same. So, here's Truth #4 — You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

Sweet friends, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you at this time. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...say them aloud, making them personal:

- God loves me
- God knows what is going on in my life
- God can do something about it
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do

The 4 Truths Illustrated by Jesus Himself

22. Read John 11: 1-15. This is one of the best biblical examples of these four truths in action.

The need: Martha informed Jesus that her brother Lazarus was sick.

- Truth #1: Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus (John 11:5).
- Truth #2: Jesus knew what was going on in Martha's life—Lazarus died (verses 6, 11, 14).
- Truth #3: Jesus could do something about it—He had healed from a distance (John 4:50-53).
- Truth #4: But, Jesus chose to do something different, even better than what anyone could imagine though it caused pain and suffering to those He loved and a lot of waiting, too (John 11:14-15).

After 4 days of being dead, Lazarus was brought back to life, and good things happened. God's goodness showed up—Lazarus had his life restored, his sisters saw their now healthy brother returned to them, the disciples witnessed an amazing work of God, and many people now believed in Jesus who had not yet believed in Him. Martha could now say to herself with assurance, "God loves me. God knows what is going on in my life. God can do something about it. I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do." And so can you!

23. ***Your Life's Journey:*** What will be your biggest challenge when it comes to believing these four truths apply to you and your situation? Be honest with the Lord. It's okay to say, "Lord Jesus, I have a hard time believing that _____ (fill in the blank). I ask you to help me learn to trust you in your choice of how to be good to me and my loved ones." Then, watch what He does!

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

24. **Your Life's Journey:** read the words to the song below. Then pick one thing that is causing you fear today. What are your choices for acting on that fear? Apply the 4 truths you learned in the Day Three Study to your situation. Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You! (Lauren Daigle, "Trust in You")

Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["The Walk from Fear to Faith-4 Essential Truths"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

The Walk from Fear to Faith—4 Essential Truths

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it.

When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. But, when we look at the Bible and see how God helped everyday people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God to strengthen us and give us courage that we didn't know we had. As you join these Old Testament women on their faith walk, you will see consistent truths that you can embrace and apply to your life today in your walk from fear to faith. You can count on them.

If you have done the lesson already, see how much you remember. 😊

Truth #1: _____

- What John 3:16 says about this—
- What Romans 5:5 says about this—

Truth #2: _____

- What Matthew 6:31-32 says about this—
- What Psalm 139 says about this—

Truth #3: _____

- What Genesis 18:14 says about this—
- What Luke 1:37 says about this—

Truth #4: _____

- What Psalm 119:68 says about this—
- What Proverbs 3:5 says about this—
- It is a choice to trust God and bank on His goodness.

As we study each of these women and let them teach us, we'll see that during their faith walks, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, they chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded their faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You and I can do the same.

God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But, in any and all situations, embrace these four truths essential to your walk from fear to faith. Make them personal:

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

You can count on those truths to lead you on your walk from fear to faith!

2 Sarah — A Woman Like Us

Time Period: The Patriarchs ~2100-1800 B.C.

“Let your beauty not be external – the braiding of hair and wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes – but the inner person of the heart, the lasting beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is precious in God’s sight. For in the same way the holy women who hoped in God long ago adorned themselves by being subject to their husbands, like Sarah who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You become her children when you do what is good and have no fear in doing so.” 1 PETER 3:3-6

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

The term *patriarch* denotes the father or male leader of a family or tribe. In the Bible, “patriarchs” usually refers to the three main characters in Genesis 12-50—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Great civilizations dotted the Ancient Near East. Ur was a thriving city with efficient government and impressive buildings. Under God’s direction, Abraham abandoned Ur, with its culture and conveniences, for the land of Canaan (today’s Israel). Patriarchal life was semi-nomadic as they wandered from place to place, searching for grazing land and water for their animals. They measured their wealth in livestock and movable goods such as silver, gold, and tents.

Archeology has given rich insights into patriarchal times. In the early 1900’s, Sir Leonard Woolley excavated Ur. He discovered the glory of the city, but he also recognized the sin. Idol worship characterized the city. It is little wonder that God called Abraham away.

The patriarchal era is important to us. Through Abraham and his descendants, God began to develop a people of His own. The Abrahamic Covenant (God’s unconditional pledge to Abraham) contains many precious promises: Abraham would have numerous offspring; his descendants would possess the land of Canaan, and the Messiah would come forth one day from his line. These promises passed on to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob’s sons formed the nucleus of the twelve tribes of Israel. Through one son’s kindness (Joseph), the infant “Israel” (70+ people) entered Egypt and grew into a great nation.

When we are introduced to this power couple in the history of Israel, their names are Abram and Sarai. For consistency’s sake, we’ll use the more common names “Abraham” and “Sarah” (names later given to them by God) throughout this lesson.

Moving from home (at 65 years old)...

1. Read Genesis 11:27-12:9. Describe Sarah and her circumstances in life at this time.

2. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research the city of Ur to find out what Sarah willingly left.

3. Barrenness for a woman in Sarah's time was very painful, not unlike for a woman in our time. Sons, in particular, were needed to carry on the family name and livelihood. How do you think Sarah's barrenness would have affected her feelings of security (particularly with Abraham) and significance (her status in society)?

4. Read Genesis 12:10-13:2. Why do you think Sarah went along with Abraham's "Tell them you're my sister" plan?

Historical Insight: Curious about Abraham's "Tell them you're my sister" plan? One historian said that if a married man of Abraham's day found himself in enemy territory, he could be killed for his wife. But, if Abraham were known as her brother, someone wanting her would have to make marriage arrangements with Abram because in that society, a woman's brother gave his sister in marriage. So Abraham would have been the negotiator thus giving him the chance to act in his own interest.

5. Consider how frightened Sarah might have been as she went along with Abraham's plan and was then taken into Pharaoh's harem. God honored Sarah for not giving way to that fear (1 Peter 3:5-6). When Abraham failed to protect Sarah in this incident, what did God do for her?

6. **Your Life's Journey:**

- Abraham had not given over the safety of his own life to the Lord yet because his faith did not extend to this area. What area of your life have you not fully given over to the Lord, and how does this affect those around you?

- Sarah was ~65 when she left Haran, moving to who-knows-where, cooperating with God's plan for Abraham even when it was tough for her. How are you at encouraging your husband or your closest friend to follow God's leading?

Day Two Study

10 years later (Sarah is now ~75)...

7. Read Genesis 15:1-6.

- What was Abraham's "Plan B" to provide an heir?
- What was still God's plan?
- How many times had He told Abraham this already?

Historical Insight: In ancient times, a man who had no son could adopt a favored servant as heir to his possessions. Or, a man who had no son could take a second wife to produce an heir. Some marriage contracts even spelled out this provision. A wife was obligated to have children. If she could not, she was *encouraged* to find her husband another wife who could.

8. Read Genesis 16. This is Sarah's "Plan B" to fix Abraham's need for an heir. Discuss her idea and the emotions she might have experienced. Notice that Abraham had not already sought a second wife.

9. Sarah's "Plan B" becomes a nightmare! Our example was no perfect woman. She was just like we are. How did Sarah react?

10. What was threatened in Sarah's life, and what confirmation did she need from her husband?

Scriptural Insight: Sin now drives a wedge between Hagar and Sarah. Hostility and mutual recrimination loom large, resulting in Hagar's fleeing her mistress's home precipitously, and pregnant at that. But in fleeing Sarah, several things happen to Hagar. She is the first person in the Bible to whom "the angel of the Lord" appears (16:11a). She is the first woman in the Bible to whom God directly makes a promise (16:11b-12). She is the only person in the Old Testament to give God a new name (16:13). And lastly, her meeting with the angel "is the only encounter between God and a woman that results in a commemorative place name (16:14)" (Adapted from *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, page 91)

13 years later (Sarah is now ~89)...

11. Read Genesis 17:1-6, 15-22. God once again told Abraham His plan to provide descendants for Abraham and a faithful people for Himself.

- How did Abraham respond this time?
- What additional information is given in Romans 4:18-21?

12. Read Genesis 18:1-15. When the visitors came by Abraham's tent, what did the Lord give Sarah for the first time?

13. What was Sarah's initial response? Why? [NOTE: The Hebrew word translated "pleasure" in verse 12 is *eden*, which is synonymous with sensual pleasure.]

14. Read Genesis 20. This happened shortly after the “tent” visit. Abraham nearly jeopardized the whole situation by again placing Sarah in another man’s harem. He fails in the same area of faith in which he failed 25 years earlier (see Day One Study). At **89 years of age**, she was taken into a harem of the reigning king. (This gives further information regarding Sarah’s beauty. God must have turned on her hormones again in a big way—super estrogen!!) There is no record that Sarah tried to protect herself this time or argue with Abraham. What does this tell you about her trust in both her husband and her God?

15. **Your Life’s Journey:** Sarah loved Abraham for many years. She followed him in some very tough situations. Their life was definitely not static or boring. Just like ours.

- If are married, in what areas have you learned greater trust of your husband?
- If you are single, in what areas have you learned greater trust of a family member or close friend?

Day Three Study

16. Read Genesis 21:1-7. Describe Sarah’s experience and the story she had to tell (vs. 6).

Think About It: Someone once said, “God’s plan is completely different from what you could ever imagine and much more glorious than you would ever expect.” Have you noticed this in your life? Is anything *really* too hard for the Lord?

17. The name Isaac means “he laughs.” In what ways is Isaac an appropriate name for this baby?

18. Through this whole experience, how do we know that God loved Sarah as much as Abraham?

3 years later (Sarah is now ~92)...

19. Read Genesis 21:8-13. What situation existed between Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael?

20. Contrast the response of Sarah with that of Abraham to the situation.

21. Discuss God's response to the situation.

22. Abraham needed Sarah's insight and advice in order to fulfill God's promise. Sometimes our husbands or closest friends need our advice. How should we pray concerning giving advice to them?

23. Read Genesis 23:1-4, 16-20 and Genesis 25:1. Sarah lived to be 127 years old. What do you learn of Abraham's regard for her until death parted them?

24. Read Hebrews 11:11-13. What testimony does the scripture give about Abraham and Sarah?

25. From our study, write down at least 7 descriptive characteristics of Sarah, positive or negative, that will help you to remember her.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Sarah. He knew what was going on in her life. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not give Sarah a child early in her marriage nor did He prevent her from making a bad decision or spending time in a king's harem. During her walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. Likewise, God may not choose to rescue you from poor decisions made by you or someone close to you. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

26. List all the situations in Sarah's life that could have "terrified" her.

27. Considering those "opportunities" for being terrified, in which ones did Sarah, by faith, do what was right and not give way to fear?

28. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Sarah is commended by God for trusting in Him and not giving way to fear. In what areas of your life have you learned greater trust of your God? Describe one area more fully in the space below.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Sarah-God Is Bigger Than Your Weaknesses”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

Sarah—Press on Beyond Your Weaknesses

Our God has bigger purposes for our weaknesses than what we see or know each step of the way.

Do you look at your life and only see weakness? You may feel helpless as a victim of circumstances. You may dwell on your mistakes. You may focus on your inadequacy, not being enough of...whatever. And, sadly, other people like to point out all those weaknesses in your life, too, making you feel even worse about them. Our God is bigger than our weaknesses. He asks us to trust Him and His purpose when we don't understand.

God is bigger than your circumstances

- Circumstances are those conditions affecting our lives that are beyond our control or ability to “fix.”
- Most of Sarah’s circumstances were out of her control. She didn’t do anything wrong. And, in her specific case, God had a bigger plan for her that depended on the right timing.
- You may be facing your own version of desperate circumstances—health problems, lack of income, bad relationships, or problems someone else caused. Having to face those circumstances leaves you with choices. You can become whiny and bitter. When you depend upon God to get you through them, you will likely see and appreciate God’s gifts to you in a greater way.

God is bigger than your mistakes

- Mistakes are generally two kinds. 1) Willfully going against clear Biblical guidance about what is right and wrong. 2) Attempting to “fix a problem” without clear Biblical guidance that doesn’t turn out as expected.
- Looking at Sarah’s life, she made one gigantic mistake that’s recorded for everyone to know and point fingers at her. She took something acceptable from her culture and tried to use it to obtain the promise of God. That mistake had huge, painful consequences. But God’s purpose wasn’t thwarted because of her mistake.
- What about those things not clearly defined as right and wrong in the Bible? God has given us a mind to use for making decisions in all areas of life. So, we should pray, ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit, get advice from other believers, check to see if it’s legal, then make the decision and act on it, trusting God with the results.
- Living by faith includes the whole process of trusting God while making a decision and trusting God with the results of it. It’s all about faith, not about being perfect.

God is bigger than your inadequacies

- To be “inadequate” means failing to reach an expected standard, to be insufficient and lacking.
- God knows all about those things in which we feel insufficient or lacking. Sometimes, He leaves us to ourselves so we will recognize how insufficient we are without Him. Then, we’ll desire Him more.
- Sarah was inadequate in her barrenness and had probably lost hope. But, God rejuvenated her body and filled it with the long-promised son.
- Thankfully, God has compassion on our inadequacies.

Press on beyond your weaknesses

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Philippians 3:13)

- Stop responding to desperate circumstances with hysteria, or replaying mistakes over and over in your mind or wallowing in your inadequacies. The question to ask now is this. “What are you going to do today to press on beyond your weakness? Beyond circumstances you’re in. Beyond mistakes you’ve made. Beyond feelings of inadequacy that you have.
- How will you trust God now to show you how to press on beyond any weakness toward a new future?
- We have a big God. He can take whatever is looking ugly in our lives and make it something praiseworthy. Maybe all that you’ve been through in life—desperate circumstances, blaring mistakes, and obvious inadequacies—have led to this moment when God has brought you to get this message so you can trust in Him.

God is bigger than your weaknesses. He could be showing you that today on your walk from fear to faith.

3 Jochebed & Miriam — Influential Women

Time: The Exodus ~1450 B.C.

“For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think with sober discernment, as God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith. For just as in one body we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another.” ROMANS 12:3-5

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

For 430 years, Israelites lived in Egypt, at first in comfort because the “vice president” of the country was their relative Joseph. But after Joseph died, there arose a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph, and Israel’s welcome grew cold. Fearing Israel’s might, Egypt sought to cripple the growing nation. But Egypt’s efforts were in vain; God was with His people, and He was preparing to bring Israel out of the land.

Conservative scholars date the “Exodus,” a landmark in Israel’s history, at 1446 B.C. Born shortly after the decree to throw Hebrew newborn boys in the Nile, Moses escaped death through adoption by pharaoh’s daughter. About 1486, the reigning Pharaoh tried to kill Moses when he sought identity with his people Israel, but Moses escaped to Midian. Forty years later, the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and Moses returned to Egypt to stand before the Pharaoh of the exodus with his brother Aaron at his side.

Through Moses, God poured out His wrath upon Pharaoh and brought Egypt to her knees. Israel marched forth a free people, living proof of God’s gracious salvation. Yet freedom did not guarantee success. Israel lacked organization. At Mount Sinai, God molded His people into a nation. The Mosaic Covenant governed every part of Israel’s society: the civil, the ceremonial, and the moral. The covenant contained special promises, but it demanded obedience. Rebellion would bring severe judgment. Israel chose to rebel against her God. Sin brought judgment, and an entire generation died. Yet, God heard the prayers of Moses and preserved His people through the wilderness.

Miriam’s childhood and her mentors...

1. Read Exodus 1:1-2:10; Hebrews 11:23. Over several generations, God used brave women to thwart evil plans to eliminate His people. List the women mentioned in the Exodus passage who exhibited courage. These were Miriam’s “mentors.”

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2. From Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59, we get additional information about Miriam's family. Her parents are named Amram and Jochebed. The children are Miriam, Aaron, and Moses. Read Hebrews 11:24-28. What influence, if any, did the few years spent with his parents have on Moses?
 3. Back to Exodus 2:1-10, how would you describe Miriam's mom Jochebed to someone? In other words, what character qualities do you "see" in her?
 4. What choices did Miriam's parents (Jochebed and Amram) make because of their faith, and how did God reward that faith?
 5. Miriam had the same home and parents as Moses. From the Exodus 2:1-10 passage (she's the sister mentioned), use adjectives to describe Miriam who was 7-12 years of age at this time.

From the Hebrew: Miriam's name in Hebrew means "bitterness." The Greek version of her name is Mary. In Israel's history after this time, Mary, Mara, and Miriam were popular girl's names.

6. As a young girl, then, what fearful situations did Miriam face, and how did she respond?

7. **Your Life's Journey:** Moses, Aaron and Miriam came from a home where parents were walking by faith in their God. In what kind of home did you grow up? How has this affected your ability to courageously trust God and not give way to fear?

Day Two Study

80 years later...

8. Read Exodus 14:1-31. Miriam is now in her upper mid-life, ~87-92 years old. What did she experience of God's faithfulness along with the rest of Israel?

Scriptural Insight: According to tradition, Miriam was married to Hur, an honorable man who along with Aaron, held up Moses' arms during a major battle in Exodus 17:10-13. He was appointed magistrate while Moses was on the mountain (Ex. 24:14).

9. Read Exodus 15:1-21. What was Miriam's response to God's faithfulness?
10. Read Micah 6:3-4. What does God say about Miriam's role for Israel? In what ways is she pleasing God and fulfilling His purpose for her?
11. Why do you think Miriam's support would have been important to Moses?

12. Looking more closely at Exodus 15:20. What is Miriam called? Read Numbers 12:2. What does Miriam say about herself?

13. A prophetess was a female prophet—one to whom and through whom God speaks, revealing Himself and His will especially in the absence of the written word of God. God used a number of women to speak forth (prophesy) His Word at critical times in history. One was Deborah whom we'll be studying in an upcoming lesson. Another such woman was Huldah. Read 2 Kings 22:1-20. This occurred about 700 years after Miriam's time. What was going on, and how did Huldah serve God and the leader of Israel?

14. Prophesying also could involve an enthusiastic praising of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Samuel 10:5-10 and 1 Chronicles 25:1.

- What activities were associated with prophesying?
- In what ways does Exodus 15:20-21 fit this description of prophesying?

Scriptural Insight: The song in Exodus 15 is the first recorded song in the Bible—a song of redemption. Such celebration was common after victory in battle. Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit residing in believers continues to inspire enthusiastic praising of God. We don't call it prophesying any longer, but it still fits the biblical definition. The Holy Spirit inspires and gifts believers today to compose songs, poems, prayers and testimonies that glorify God.

15. **Tell Your Story:** Miriam testified about God's faithfulness through her use of poetry, song, and dance. The Holy Spirit still inspires us to break out in enthusiastic praise to God through various means.

- Have you written a song, a poem, prose, created a work of art, or simply sang praise songs to Him? What led to this expression in your life?

- Even if you've never testified like Miriam did, your STORY of God's faithfulness in your life is your testimony about Him. Write a short paragraph telling of an area in your life where you have recognized God's faithfulness to you. This is a part of your STORY of God's faithfulness.

Day Three Study

About 2 years later...

16. Read Numbers 12:1-16. Why did Miriam and Aaron begin to talk against Moses?

17. What do you think was the real reason for their complaining?

Think About It: One of the torments of envy is that it can never turn away its eyes from the thing that pains it. Envy blocks our trust in God, hurts our relationships, makes us resent God's goodness to others, and blinds us to God's goodness to us.

18. Discuss the Lord's response to their behavior (vs. 2-10).

19. What is implied by the fact that the Lord punished only Miriam? See also James 3:5-6.

Scriptural Insight: Spitting in one's face expressed contempt (Deut. 25:9). The Lord expressed His contempt for Miriam's presumption by the skin affliction.

20. Why was a skin disease such as leprosy so awful? See Numbers 5:1-4.

Think About It: Miriam bucked her authority, claiming equal prominence with Moses. Because of her attitude and resulting action, God disciplined her through banishment, opposite of what she really wanted!

21. How did Miriam's brothers respond to the discipline of their sister?

22. Read Deuteronomy 24:8-9. What do you think was the effect of Miriam's banishment from the camp for 7 days ...

- on her?
- on the people?

Historical Insight: Sometimes Miriam was a good example; sometimes a bad example. Just like we are, she was not perfect every day. Yet, she had been given a sphere of influence by God. She lived through 38 years of wandering and died just before Aaron in the 40th year out of Egypt at ~130 years old (Numbers 20:1).

23. Read Romans 13:1-2 and Hebrews 13:7,17. How does what you read in Numbers 12 illustrate these passages?

24. ***Your Life's Journey:***

- There are serious consequences of our attitudes towards authority. Though all of us are not leaders, all of us are under some kind of authority in the Church. Is there someone in leadership now of whom you are jealous, resentful, or disapproving? Do you try to undermine their leadership by gossip or slander? Read Proverbs 10:19. Discuss how to apply this scripture to your life.
- Read Mark 10:42-45, Galatians 5:26, Philippians 2:3-4, Romans 12:3-5, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. These verses, teaching how we should all relate to each other in God's family, apply as well to leaders. What attitudes should we have if we are in leadership positions in the Body of Christ?

Day Four Study — The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Miriam's family. He knew what was going on in their lives. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not give Jochebed her son back permanently to raise nor did He prevent them from having to go through the agony of hiding baby Moses. Miriam was given great responsibility and privilege, yet she also had to live with the consequences of her sin. During her walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, Miriam and her family chose to trust Him rather

than submit to fear. And, God rewarded their faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. Likewise, God may not choose to rescue you from your “Egypt.” But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

25. What situations could have caused fear for Jochebed? How did she respond to God by faith?

26. Thinking back through Miriam’s life, what situations did she face that could have terrified her? How did she respond to God by faith in those situations?

27. **Your Life’s Journey:** In the podcast that follows this lesson, you will find a biblical tool you can use to apply faith to your fear. Go through this “Applying Faith to Fear” process to write out your plan of action to apply faith to one of your fears right now. Find a copy of this “Applying Faith to Fear” process at the end of this study guide that you can cut out and keep with you in your Bible.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Miriam-How to Apply Faith to Any Fear”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

Miriam—How to Apply Faith to Fear

A biblical tool that you can use to apply faith to any fear

As a pillar of cloud and fire, God put himself between the people and the Egyptian army, keeping His people safe. God caused a wind to blow all night, dividing the water into two walls and drying up the sea floor between them. The next day the Israelites took their walk from fear to faith as they tramped to the other shore. When all His people were safe, God caused the water to flow back on the Egyptian army. The Lord fought for them. They needed only to stop being terrified and to trust Him. Moses led the trembling people to apply faith to their fear. They confronted it and turned it over to God, at least for that moment. Their faithful God took over and proved that He was stronger than their enemies.

What do you do with your fears? Use this biblical tool to apply faith to any fear.

Find a copy of this “Applying Faith to Fear” process at the end of this study guide that you can cut out and keep with you in your Bible.

1. Confront it. What fears do you have right now?

- Think of the things that make you afraid. The real fears and the imaginary ones.
- Which ones are the most likely to tempt you to panic or to be terrified? Focus on those.

2. Ask about each one: What is my worst-case scenario?

- Start with one of those fears, perhaps the most terrifying one, and ask yourself, “What is likely the worst that could happen?” Think realistically not hypothetically.

3. Consider: If the worst I can imagine happens, could I handle it through the presence and power of Jesus Christ?

- As a Christian, you have the power of the One who created the Universe living inside of you. Ask yourself, “Can He help me get through anything?” The answer is a definite, “YES!”
- Hebrews 4:15-16 tell us that our high priest Jesus knows and understands what we are going through so we can go to Him for mercy and help in our time of need. That help usually comes from God’s power working on our behalf.

“[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us...” (Ephesians 3:20)

-
- His power is working **in** us. According to Ephesians 1:19, it is working **for** us, too. So, say to yourself, “If the worst I can imagine happens, I can handle it through the presence and power of Jesus Christ working on my behalf.”

4. Remember the four truths:

- God loves you.
 - He knows what is going on in your life.
 - He can do something about it.
 - You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.
- Repeat them to yourself. Over and over again. Believe them. Count on them.

5. Pray: Prayer is simply talking to God about anything and everything.

- Prayer is simply talking to God about anything and everything. This is where you trust the Lord, handing it over to Him, whatever it is.
- Thank the Lord for His presence and His goodness and anything else that comes to mind.
- Ask Him for the courage and the peace to ride out the storm. Where the Bible is clear, you can claim God’s promises by faith—like the promise of peace. Jesus told His followers,

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

- Anytime, you can ask for peace, deliverance and protection. But, you cannot hold God to promises He hasn’t made. He hasn’t promised immunity from natural calamities, from illness, or from troubles.

6. Live life securely in Him.

- Remember that fear as an emotion is designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. So, while trusting God and praying for peace and courage, take common sense precautions. Be wise in the world.

Trust God to show you what to do and give you strength to do it when you are weak.

4 Rahab — A Past And A Future

Time: Into the Land ~1400 B.C.

"By faith Rahab the prostitute escaped the destruction of the disobedient, because she welcomed the spies in peace." HEBREWS 11:31

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

After 40 years of struggle, Israel stood poised to enter the Promised Land. But she would enter without Moses for he was dead. Much work remained. This beautiful new land was dangerous. Numerous city-states dotted the landscape, each a well-fortified, walled fortress with a battle-tested army. Conquest would be a difficult, time-consuming task.

But, God remained faithful to His people. He equipped a new leader, Joshua, who had been trained under Moses' leadership for 40 years for this job. Joshua knew that the 2.5 million Israelites plus their flocks and herds needed to cross a flooded river and begin their conquest of the land. So, he sent 2 spies to secretly scout the area of imminent war, particularly Jericho—the strategic point to reach the three passes through the wilderness to the rest of Canaan. God took care of the river crossing for the Israelites, miraculously providing dry ground for them to move through and onto Jericho—a walled city on ~9.5 acres—once around would have taken ~1/2 hour!!

1. Read Deuteronomy 4:32-40. Why did God bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, especially accompanied by so many miraculous events?

Getting to know Rahab...

2. Read Exodus 15:15-16 and Deuteronomy 2:24-25. What was God's plan?
3. Read Joshua 2:1-11.
 - What did Rahab, the people of Jericho, and the surrounding nations know about Israel and her history?

-
- As a result, what was the state of morale in Jericho?

Historical Insight: The citizens of Jericho were well prepared for a siege since a spring lay inside the city walls and the harvest had just been gathered (Joshua 3:15), providing an abundant supply of food, seen in the large jars of grain found in the houses. So, the inhabitants of Jericho could have held out for perhaps several years. The full grain jars show that the siege was short since the people inside the walls consumed very little of the grain, another historical verification of biblical accuracy.

4. Use adjectives to describe Rahab in your own words.
5. What conclusion did Rahab make about the God of Israel? Could anyone else in Jericho have come to the same conclusion? Explain.
6. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research the ancient city of Jericho. What was it like for Rahab to live there?
7. Rahab was given an opportunity to make a conscious choice for God based upon the facts she knew about Him, and she responded with FAITH! Faith resulted in action.
 - What did she do that day?
 - What risk was she taking?

8. Compare Rahab's choice to disobey & lie to her king with Sarah's choice to agree to Abraham's "Tell them you're my sister" plan. See also Miriam's mentors in Exodus 1:15-20.

Think About It: Rahab didn't know this new God well enough to know He could be trusted to protect His own people. This is something she would learn firsthand in just a couple of weeks.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Day Two Study

9. Read Joshua 2:12-21. The spies made a covenant with Rahab.

- What part of the oath was Rahab's responsibility?
- What part of the oath was the responsibility of the spies?

Historical Insight: The early church viewed the blood-colored cord as a symbol of Christ's atonement like the blood of the Passover lamb.

After the spies' return, God parted the Jordan River for the people to cross. All of those men who had been born in the wilderness were circumcised. The Passover was celebrated. And, the people ate produce from the land. The manna stopped the next day.

10. Read Joshua 6:1-25. What was God's plan for defeating Jericho?

11. How did Joshua and the people respond?

12. Rahab had to wait those seven days also. Based on her responsibility in the oath, who else was waiting with her?

13. What might have been Rahab's emotions during this time of waiting? (See also Joshua 5:1 for the emotions of those around her.)

14. Someone once said, "Responsibility is my response to His (God's) ability." Rahab responded to God's ability. What did God do for her and her family? Be specific.

Historical Insight: Surrounding Jericho was a tall embankment with a stone retaining wall at its base 12–15 feet high. Above that stood a mud brick wall 6 feet thick, 20 feet high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar 20-foot high mud brick wall reaching to ~46 feet above the ground level below. Humanly speaking, the fortress of Jericho was impregnable. Archeological evidence reveals that the mud brick city wall collapsed as the city met its end (~1400 B.C.) **except** for a short stretch of the north city wall that did not fall as everywhere else. There were houses built against the wall as in Joshua 2:15. Excavations showed that the bricks from the collapsed walls formed a ramp against the retaining wall so that the Israelites could climb up over the top as is described in Joshua 6:20. The city was thoroughly burned. (Taken from "The Walls of Jericho" by Bryant Wood, *Creation* magazine, March 1999, pages 36-40)

15. *Your Life's Journey: "Waiting"*

Scriptural Insight: The Hebrew word most commonly translated as wait (upon the Lord) is *qavah*, which means to hope and expect. It also means to bind together as in tying together loose ends. Waiting is rarely pleasant to us, but we make ourselves do it daily in various situations (doctor's offices, traffic, checkout lanes). Our focus is usually not on the waiting itself, but on the end result of the waiting. When it comes to waiting on the Lord, the Bible communicates a clear message: we are to do it, and it's good for us. Psalm 27:14 tells us waiting on the Lord will "strengthen your heart" (NKJV). Waiting on God brings us strength in all areas in our lives. It teaches us about Him, and His timing. During those times of waiting, our ear is more attuned to the work of God. Micah 7:7 says, "I will watch expectantly for the Lord." We also make ourselves available to talk with Him in prayer. When we seek God for a solution in our lives, these times of waiting strengthen our relationship with Him as we learn to rely on His timing and trust in His goodness. It binds us together with Him. (Taken from "Entwined in Him" by Lisa Jenkins-Moore, *Living Magazine*, November 2016, pp. 16-17)

Rahab had to wait patiently for God to act. Remember that she did not know the "marching" orders. We also must wait for God's "always perfect" timing in answer to our prayers. Is this a problem for you? If you have become discouraged (or been discouraged in the past) from having to wait, write about it here.

Read the words to the song below. Consider that God is in the waiting, too, and that waiting binds you together with Him? How does this change your perspective of waiting?

"You are in the waiting in that moment of my life, when my faith and hope collide. My heart's anticipating just how and when You'll move. Oh, that's when You prove You are in the waiting too" ("In the Waiting" by Shannon Wexelberg)

Day Three Study

16. Read Matthew 1:5, Hebrews 11:30-31, and James 2:25. This is Rahab's report card. What does it say?
17. In Hebrews 11:31, the word used to describe the rest of the people of Jericho is "disobedient," which means, "to refuse to be persuaded." See your answers to the questions in Day One Study. Did God give them an opportunity to be "persuaded"? Explain.
18. Since Rahab was likely a prostitute just as it is written, what does the mention of Rahab three times in the New Testament reveal about God's grace to her? In other words, how did God forgive her past and give her a new future?

Scriptural Insight: For centuries, Christians have tried to soften Rahab's reputation by arguing that she was only an innkeeper, but the New Testament references to her indicate that she was an immoral woman. The Greek word used to describe Rahab is *porne* the word from which we get "pornography." "Porne" is only used for immorality. This in no way mars the righteousness of God who used such a person in the fulfillment of His purposes. Instead this incident serves to bring His mercy and grace into bold relief. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 330)

19. **Your Life's Journey:** Do you feel that some sins in your past or present are so terrible that they can't be forgiven or that you are unworthy to serve God? What have you learned from Rahab's story that confirms to you God can forgive your past and give you a new future?

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Rahab. He knew what was going on in her life. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not keep Rahab from losing the security of her home nor did He prevent her from having to go through the agony of watching the Israelites march around the city for 7 days. Remember, she didn't know that plan. When she stepped out in faith, He met her there. She trusted Him to rescue her, and He did. God judged her by her heart—the inward woman, not by her lifestyle—the outward appearance. He not only saved her life, but He forgave her past and gave her a new future. She chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. Likewise, God forgives your past and gives you a new future. And, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

20. Consider all the opportunities for fear in Rahab's life. How did she demonstrate faith at those times?

21. **TELL YOUR STORY:** We will probably never be faced with the dramatic circumstances of Rahab, but we do have our own distressing situations in life. What distressing situations are you facing now, and what choices are available to you? Read Psalm 40:1-3 and 46:1-3 to give you strength. Journal about how you will trust God. This is part of your story.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Rahab-God Is Good All the Time”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Rahab—God Is Good All the Time

God is good in Himself, and what He does is good.

Most of us don't like to wait for God to work. And, we certainly don't like what appears to be a "No" answer to our prayer! Be honest here. We may say to each other, "God is good all the time," but do we really believe He is good when we get that "No" answer or that "Not yet" answer to our prayer?

The fact that God is good all the time is a key truth and something we can trust on our walk from fear to faith.

The Bible says that God is good all the time

- Everything about God is good. He is good in Himself, and what He does is good. That means God allows nothing to happen to His children—to you and me—that is not for our good. God is good all the time, and He is at work in our lives for good.
- What about the tough things that happen to us? Someone gets very sick, loses a job, or is in a desperate situation. Is God being good then? What must be the answer to that question? YES! Why? Because **God is good all the time**.
- God's goodness has three aspects that apply to our times of fear and pain.

1) God is good even in the tough times

- God is the perfect parent and knows what will help His children grow into maturity. That sometimes includes pain.
- God teaches His children through tough things that He allows in our lives that help us grow up. Those tough things build bones and teeth in our faith. They help us learn to trust God. They help us learn to give up trying to do things our own way—which may not be the best way—and start doing things God's way—which is always the best way.
- ANYTHING that draws us closer to God and makes us depend upon Him is good for us. God is good even in the tough times.

2) God is good in different ways to each of us

- Through reading the Bible, you can see that God's goodness looks different in each person's life. Take for example the book of Ruth. Naomi and her family were starving so they moved away from Israel to the neighboring country Moab to get bread. There they met Ruth. Ruth didn't need food; she needed God. Naomi shared God with Ruth.

- Different needs were met by God's goodness. God is good in different ways to each of us.

3) God is good in what He allows or doesn't allow into our lives

- Not everyone gets cancer, has a serious injury or a chronic illness. We don't all endure long-term unemployment, lose a child or experience the desertion of a spouse.
- Throughout the Bible are many verses stating how God protected someone in a dangerous situation. We don't even know all the dangers God is protecting us from daily!
- We should thank Him all the time for doing that. God is good in what He allows or doesn't allow into our lives.

Depend on God while you trust what He chooses to do in your life

- You cannot move from fear to faith on your own. You must trust God and depend on His power in you.
 - Fear says, "I can't." Faith says, "God can through me."
 - Fear says, "I won't." Faith says, "God will in me."
 - Fear says, "I don't." Faith says, "God does for me and through me."
- You can say about anything, "Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own. But, you can do this in and through me. I will trust you." And, it's okay to be a little scared because we will rely upon Him more.

Conclusion

We have a big God. Yet, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. You may face what seem like insurmountable circumstances in your life. You may have to give up something that gives you security. You may be waiting for God to answer a desperate prayer. But, in any and all situations, even in the waiting, you can count on the fact that God is good all the time, that He loves you, that He knows what is going on in your life, that He can do something about it, and you can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

That's how we move from fear to faith. When we do that, God fills our hearts with joy.

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5 Deborah & Jael — Resourceful Women

Time: The Judges ~1400-1000 B.C.

“For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them.” EPHESIANS 2:10

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

As Israel entered the Promised Land, God worked great miracles: the waters of the Jordan parted, the walls of Jericho fell, and the sun stood still over Gibeon. No task was too great for Israel's God. At last, after more than six years of fighting, the initial conquest came to a close. Joshua sent the tribes forth to occupy their lands. As the tribes moved in, they were commanded to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan, but they failed to complete the mission. The children of Israel had crippled the Canaanite peoples, but they had not destroyed them. The remaining Canaanites, a corrupt people, eventually turned Israel from God.

For almost four hundred years, Israel followed a monotonous cycle:

- Sin (mostly idolatry & immorality) — Not long after getting settled in her land, Israel adopted the religion and the lifestyle of the pagan Canaanites by worshipping idols and practicing immorality, theft, and murder. Her society fell apart. Tyranny and force became the norm; inept leaders were unable to check the excessive violence. Selfish desires for tribal glory and supremacy, as well as unwillingness to accept reproof, led to tragic civil wars.
- Suffering (having enemies rule over them or terrorize them) — Because of their idolatry and hard hearts, God brought severe judgment on the land, allowing the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Canaanites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines to oppress and dominate His people for a time.
- Supplication (calling out to God, earnest prayer) — The enemies' oppression of the people drove them back to their God and calling out to Him for help.
- Salvation (in this context meaning deliverance, aid, victory, or prosperity) — God would send human leaders called “Judges” to defeat the oppressing nations and bring periods of rest. These Judges—8 in all—were civil and military leaders who led the nation against its enemies. Their civil job was to urge repentance (turning back to God alone, in faith) and to give counsel. Then, the land would experience peace for 20-40 years during the lifetime of the “deliverer.” Not long after that person died, the people went back to their wicked ways, beginning the cycle again.

One such judge was Deborah, who came along ~150 years after Joshua died...

1. Skim Deuteronomy 28:1-25 and 29:16-18. What were God's *general* instructions to Israel concerning life in the land?

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2. Read Judges 2:6-23. In verses 10-19, the repeating pattern of the book of Judges is described here. Why did the Israelites forget God and choose to sin so readily after Joshua died?
 3. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research to find out more about the Canaanite oppression during this time in Israel's history. How did it affect their daily lives?
 4. Read Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 4:5-9, 29:24-27. Discuss cause and effect in these passages.
 5. How is God's faithfulness demonstrated in the way He dealt with His people?

Think About It: It's as though God was saying to them, "You don't think you need me. Let me show you what life is like without me."

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Day Two Study

Getting to know Deborah...

6. Read Judges 4:1-16. Israel was in what part of the cycle during Deborah's lifetime (verses 1-3)?
7. Based on what you glean from the text, describe Deborah using as many adjectives as possible.
8. From our study of Miriam, what was the role of a prophetess? (See Lesson 3.)
9. Referring to specific verses, how did Deborah act as a prophetess in this narrative?
10. Compare Deborah and Barak regarding the response of each to God's word and the courage to carry it out.
11. God commends Barak for his faith in Hebrews 11:32-34. How did Barak demonstrate it?

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12. Considering Sisera's primary military weapons (vs. 3), why did God want the Israelites to encamp on a mountain 1300 feet high?

Historical insight: Palestine is covered with wadis, or dry creek beds. During a sudden, violent rainstorm, these wadis fill with rushing water, which can destroy anything in its path. God routed the enemy by throwing them into a panic like the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24). A similar army-defeating rainstorm happened when Napoleon defeated the Turks in the same place (Megiddo) in AD 1799. See the description in Judges 5:4, 20-21.

13. ***Your Life's Journey:*** God can use any of our skills and talents to His glory when we focus on what we have, not what we don't have, and give it to Him. In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." And, He gives us the ability to do the works He has created us to do. How are you serving God using your gifts as Deborah served Him using hers? What, if anything, is holding you back?

Day Three Study

Getting to know Jael...

14. Read Judges 4:17-24. Describe Jael—what she did, resources she used, and character qualities she possessed.

15. Read Judges 4:9 again. Was Jael doing God's will? Explain.

Historical Insight: According to Numbers 10:29 and Judges 1:16, the Kenites were allies of Israel. Heber, Jael's husband, left his tribe. The Kenites were metalworkers. Perhaps Heber allied himself with Sisera for business reasons ("iron chariots").

16. Considering her husband Heber's actions, what risks did Jael take in her relationship with him?

17. How did she "do what was right and not give way to fear"?

18. Read Judges 5:1-31 and note what is revealed about the following:

- Courage and trust in God (2-5, 9-11) —
- Fear (6-8) —
- Deborah and her role (7, 12-15) —
- Who helped and who didn't (14-18, 23) —
- The defeat of Sisera (19-21) —
- Jael and her role (24-27) —

Focus on the Meaning: The Canaanites' God Baal was their storm god of rain and fertility. His symbol was a lightning bolt. God showed who was the real storm God.

19. What does this narrative (Judges 4 and 5) tell us about God's use of women in civil leadership in a society?

20. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Think about how God used Deborah and Jael as they functioned in their various roles as women with the resources available to them every day. Consider how your everyday womanly skills and resources have benefited others. Write about one specific time when God used your ordinary life skills to do something unexpected or greatly needed.

Day Four Study — The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Deborah and Jael. He knew what was going on in their lives: the burden of responsibility, the risks they faced, and their fears. He was able to do something about it. He didn't give them easy choices to make, ones that would've made their lives much more comfortable. Deborah chose to use the gifts God gave her to glorify Him and to bolster Barak's courage and reputation. Jael took great risks and confirmed her people's allegiance to the tribe of Israel by her actions. And they both chose to trust God rather than submit to fear. God rewarded their faith with victory. You may face what seem like insurmountable circumstances in your own life. But just like Deborah and Jael, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

21. What opportunities for fear did Deborah have? How did she respond to God in faith?

22. What could have terrified Jael? How did she respond instead?

23. ***Your Life's Journey:*** A courageous attitude begins long before you are ever called upon to use it. When was the last time you showed **courage** in living for Christ—such as testifying publicly about your faith, challenging others to do right, forgetting the opinion of the crowd, expressing love and appreciation for those in authority, etc.?

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Deborah-Face Trouble with Courage and Peace](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Deborah—Face Trouble with Courage and Peace

We can learn to face life's realities with courage and peace, entrusting ourselves and our loved ones to a God who loves us dearly.

Storms of life hit all of us.

- In Mark chapter 5, the disciples found themselves in the middle of a fierce storm and got afraid. Jesus asked them why they were cringing in fear and why they didn't believe what He already told them about getting to the other side of the lake.
- Storms of life hit every day to even the most faithful Christians. Every one of us must deal with disappointments, problems, and tragedies in life.
- Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to the presence of danger so that we will take action against it. We are supposed to act on it by either fleeing from the danger or facing it head on. Fear is a gift of God.
- Where we get into trouble is when we let our imaginations run wild, give in to despair, and doubt God's goodness. That pessimism comes from our view of trouble.

The pagan, non-biblical view of trouble

- It says that when things go well, the gods are happy with us. When things go wrong, the gods are angry with us. So, the goal of life is to stay on the good side of the gods so bad things won't happen.
- Christians can get caught up into this kind of thinking when we try to interpret events, especially tragedies, as *signs* of God's anger or punishment. Don't do it.
- When the disciples asked if Jesus even cared if they drowned, they doubted His love and goodness.

The godly, biblical view of trouble

- **Fact #1: We live in a fallen, evil, cursed world.** We are in the last days of this broken old creation which will not get fixed until Jesus returns. In that until time, while we are waiting, you and I have the life of the new creation on the inside through the Holy Spirit. But at the same time, we are living in a body and world of the old, fallen creation.
- **Fact #2: God has chosen from the beginning to give all humans the freedom to act.** Some trouble comes from our own idiotic behavior. We make bad decisions then have to

deal with the consequences. They may be hard, but God lets us experience consequences to show us why we need Him more and how ugly our sin really is.

- **Fact #3: We have an enemy named Satan who is real and has influence on our natural world and the people in it.** The devil entices people to rebel against God, and he can cause bad things to happen.
- **Fact #4: Our God is great and powerful and will one day fix this broken world.** That is a promise to us. It will happen in our future.
- In the meantime, problems and troubles in life are normal, not abnormal. We should expect trouble.
- Women were created with a need for security and stability so we aim to control our environment to create that security for us and for those we love. Our western way of thinking is that we can fix it—whatever IT is. When we cannot fix it, we panic. And, fear can bring out the worst in us.
- Control is an illusion. We can only control our own behavior and thinking. So, stop that bad thinking that God is mad at you when trouble hits and start thinking with a Biblical mind. God is good. And, in His goodness, He allows some not-so-good things into our lives.
- Our choice is not *whether* we will have trouble, but *what kind of **preparation** we'll make and **response** we'll choose* in facing life's realities when they hit us.

Preparation and response to life's troubles

- The preparation is filling your mind with truth from God's Word. Believing that God is good all the time and that He loves you. Truths clearly stated in Scripture. God never withdraws His love from you. That frees you to love Him back. To trust him. To obey Him. To use all of your resources to serve Him even while living in a hostile war zone.
- Right thinking may not make the trouble go away or make life easy again. But you will be better able to walk forward with the courage and peace to face whatever hits.

That's how you walk from fear to faith.

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6 Naomi & Ruth — Mothers And Daughters

Time: The Judges ~1400-1000 B.C.

"When the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines; when the olive trees do not produce, and the fields yield no crops; when the sheep disappear from the pen, and there are no cattle in the stalls, I will rejoice because of the Lord; I will be happy because of the God who delivers me!" HABAKKUK 3:17-18

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

One of the ways that God disciplined Israel for her sin was by bringing famine into the land, usually through drought but also by pests such as locusts. During one of these episodes of famine, a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech took his wife Naomi and his two sons to the neighboring country of Moab. During the ten years the family lived in the land of Moab, Elimelech died leaving Naomi a widow. However, her two sons grew up and married Moabite women. Then, the sons died. Naomi was left with only her daughters-in-law.

Getting to know Naomi and Ruth...

1. Read Judges 21:25. This is considered the key verse of the book of Judges. What does it reveal?
2. Read Ruth 1:1-22. Describe each of the women.
 - Naomi —
 - Ruth —

-
3. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research Moab and the Moabite religion to get a better feel for how Ruth was raised, what Naomi experienced living in that land, raising her own children, watching them marry Moabite women, and other details that bring this story alive to you.
 4. What does Ruth's statement in 1:16-17 especially tell you about her and what she had already learned from Naomi?
 5. What relationships might she be giving up to pursue her new faith?
 6. **Your Life's Journey:** Has your faith caused a separation between you and your natural family or someone previously very close to you? Explain.
 7. A good guess of ages would be that Naomi was in her 40's and Ruth was in her teens or 20's. As in-laws, describe their relationship and ways they could help each other.

8. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Naomi makes an emotional statement in 1:20-21. She was experiencing grief—a normal human emotion that often causes an aching heart and extended sadness. Write about a time in your life when you grieved over something or someone lost. What was it like? How long did it last? Did you, like Naomi, feel that God “dealt very bitterly with you” (1:20)? What got you through that to the other side where you didn’t bawl every time you thought about it?

Day Two Study

9. Read Ruth 2:1-23. How does Naomi counsel and encourage Ruth?

10. How did Ruth take care of Naomi—actions and attitude?

11. What emotions might each have been experiencing at this time?

- Naomi —

- Ruth —

12. Focus on Ruth 2:11-12 as Naomi revealed her “story,” particularly in regards to Ruth. How did this “story sharing” benefit both of them, especially the outsider Ruth?

13. Men generally owned property, not women. With no men left in the family, the women lacked a means of support. Read Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22.

- Unlike the cultures around them that made no societal provisions, what special provision does God make for the future care of women in Israel in this situation?

- How should this foster compassion in the community?

14. Read Ruth 3:1-4:12. In 3:1-6, what advice does Naomi give to Ruth?

15. The law of “Kinsman-Redeemer” is introduced to the Israelites in Leviticus 25:23-55. Read those verses. What was God’s purpose in providing this option?

Scriptural insight: “This law [Kinsman-Redeemer] helped to protect the poor from being exploited and the rich from taking property from one tribe to another. The redeemer had to be a near kinsman who was able to redeem and willing to redeem. He was not obligated to do so, but it was expected of him. To refuse was to hurt the family and tribe as well as his own reputation. By being born at Bethlehem, Jesus Christ became our near kinsman. He was able to save and willing to save; He saves all who will put their trust in Him.” (W.W. Wiersbe, *With the Word*, pg. 157)

16. Read the following references. Briefly tell what is redeemed in each case. [NOTE: “avenger” and “kinsman-redeemer” are translations of the same Hebrew word *goel*.]

- Leviticus 25:25-28 —

- Leviticus 25:47-49 —

- Deut. 25:5-10 —

17. Ruth is introduced to the concept of “Kinsman-Redeemer” in Ruth 1:11-13; 2:20; and 3:9-13. From 4:1-10, what other information do we see about how this law was carried out?

18. What did Ruth learn about God’s faithfulness to her through the law of the “kinsman-redeemer”?

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

Day Three Study

19. Read 4:13-22. What did God give to Ruth and Naomi?

20. How did God bless us through this marriage? See Ruth 4:22; Matthew 1:3-6; and Luke 3:32.

Scriptural Insight: Boaz descended from Rahab (Lesson 4)—an outsider who also experienced the kindness of the Lord and His people.

21. Ruth and Naomi both characterized loyalty.

- Use a dictionary to define “Loyalty.”
- To whom and to what should we be loyal? Explain your answer.

22. Read Titus 2:3-5.

- In what ways is the older woman to counsel and encourage the younger woman?
- What mindset must the younger woman have?
- What are the potential benefits for both?

23. **Your Life's Journey:** God knows we need each other. He hasn't left us alone. In the Body of Christ, we are all sisters. Christian women should be encouraging each other, especially in our society where women are so often uprooted and transplanted to places miles away from their families. There are some things only another woman can understand.

- *Younger women*—Is there someone in your group or life whom you would trust for advice and encouragement? Go to her and let her know of your need and willingness.
- *Older women*—Is there someone in your group or life whom you could befriend and encourage? Go to her and let her know of your need and willingness.
- *In-laws*—If you are married or one of your children is married, evaluate your own mother-in-law / daughter-in-law relationship. How can you apply this lesson to improve your relationship?

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Ruth and Naomi. He knew what was going on in their lives. Naomi voiced her grief over the death of her husband and sons but never stopped trusting Him to do something about her situation. Ruth's relationship with God started the same way most relationships with Him do. She came to know and value someone who knew Him well. That someone was Naomi. These women were not only God's provision to each other but also a way for Him to make Himself known through their lives. You may face grief and seemingly overwhelming challenges in your own life. But just like Naomi and Ruth, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

24. List all the circumstances that could have terrified Naomi. Instead, how did she respond to God by faith?

25. List all the circumstances that could have terrified Ruth. Instead, how did she respond to God by faith?

26. **Your Life's Journey:** Read Habakkuk 3:17-18, Daniel 3:16-18, and the song lyrics below.

I can count a million times people asking me how I can praise You with all that I've gone through. The question just amazes me. Can circumstances possibly change who I forever am in You. Maybe since my life was changed long before these rainy days. It's never really ever crossed my mind to turn my back on you, oh Lord, my only shelter from the storm. But instead I draw closer through these times. So I pray... Bring me joy, bring me peace, bring the chance to be free. Bring me anything that brings You glory. And I know there'll be days when this life brings me pain. But if that's what it takes to praise You, Jesus, bring the rain ("Bring the Rain" by MercyMe)

What decision should you make when things are tough? Do you trust God enough to make that decision? If so, give an example from your life when you have done so.

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Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["Naomi, Ruth-Life Should Not Be Lived Alone"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

Naomí & Ruth—Life Should Not Be Lived Alone

When you are facing any situation that is tough or is frightening, God doesn't intend for you to face it alone.

The book of Ruth illustrates that life should not be lived alone

- Life seems much harder when we are alone. Fear multiplies when we are alone. When we are facing any situation that is tough or is frightening, God doesn't intend for us to face it alone.
- The Holy Spirit places you in the Body of Christ from the very moment you say yes to Jesus so that you are connected to other believers. It is essential that you connect yourself to other believers.
- A grieving Naomi started to pull away from the people she knew the best and was isolating herself. God placed Ruth there, and Ruth wasn't going to let Naomi be by herself.

Why and how women isolate themselves

- Women isolate themselves from others when they're experiencing trouble. Sometimes grief. Sometimes when going through marital strife. Sometimes after a move to a different location where they don't know anyone.
- Women give up on the church community and don't feel like they need to be part of a local church. The bad behavior of Christian leaders that hits the news may be their excuse. Or, they may have been wounded by a church member and walk away so as not to be wounded again.

Why you shouldn't isolate yourself

- Christians need each other for warmth and encouragement. Romans 1:12 says that we get mutual encouragement from one another as we are together. Everyone needs that.
- And, a local church community with good biblical teaching can keep you safe from false teaching. Pastors and teachers who love Jesus will help you grow in your Christian life as they feed you the spiritual food of the Bible and help you to know God better.
- Being part of a church family also helps you learn how to love others and their differences. Jesus knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. Our relationship with Him does not prevent us from having misunderstandings or differences of opinion. Sometimes these relational challenges tempt us to harbor grudges against someone with whom we

differ. Or, they tempt us to isolate ourselves from the whole community. Neither of these is healthy for you. Isolation will lead to stunted spiritual growth and a lack of joy in your life.

- Galatians 6:2 says that we are to bear one another's burdens. We do that by being together, doing life together.

Are you trying to do life alone? Find community.

- Admit your God-given need for community. Take action.
 - Find a local church that presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God and faith in Him alone as the only way to be saved and have a relationship with God.
 - Find a church that honors the Bible as God's Word, completely true, and the guidebook for life and decision-making.
 - Find a church that encourages you to personally follow Jesus as His disciple and grow stronger in your faith.
 - Then, join a small group within that community and get connected. Share your life with others. Let them encourage you and bear your burdens while you do the same for them. Praise God together as you see him work in your lives.

Are you well-connected? Pay attention and come alongside the lonely one.

- Praise God for the joy of being well-connected. Pay attention and come alongside someone who may be isolated and lonely, trying to face life on her own.
- Pay attention just means to listen to how she describes herself or her life. Make mental note to find out more about her.
- Then, come alongside her. Invite her to join you for something during the next week—early before work, during the day, after supper—doesn't matter. Just find a time that works and do it. **Share** a little of your stories when you get together. Find out where she is in her walk of faith. Connect her with others who might have similar interests or needs. Bring the community together around her.
- Please do not try to do life alone. Think about what happens when you burn wood in a fireplace or fire pit. You can easily see that logs burn more brightly when they're placed together. But separate one log from the rest, and pretty soon it will grow cold. The same is true about us. Christians need each other for warmth and encouragement.

When you are facing a situation that is tough or is frightening, God doesn't intend for you to face it alone. That is a huge part of our walk from fear to faith.

7 Hannah & Mrs. Manoah — Mothering Challenges

Time: The Judges ~1400-1000 B.C.

"She said, 'Just as surely as you are alive, my lord, I am the woman who previously stood here with you in order to pray to the Lord. I prayed for this boy, and the Lord has given me the request that I asked of him. Now I dedicate him to the Lord. From this time on he is dedicated to the Lord.' Then they worshiped the Lord there." 1 SAMUEL 1:26-28

Day One Study

Historical Insight

The faithful who lived in Israel during this time endured repeated cycles of enemy oppression followed by deliverance and a time of peace before Israel rebelled against God again. The women in this lesson lived in the last part of the time of the Judges.

Mrs. Manoah's son, Samson, was the "judge" (deliverer) during the time period when Hannah's son, Samuel, was born so the two were contemporaries. Samuel was the last judge because during his life, Israel demanded a king. God gave them a king.

Getting to know Mrs. Manoah...

1. We don't know her name, but we know of her famous son Samson. Let's find out what his mom was like. Read Judges 13:1-24. Use words and phrases to describe Mrs. Manoah.
2. What needs did the Lord notice and prepare to meet?
 - personal —
 - national —
3. How did God communicate to Mrs. Manoah His plan?

From the Hebrew: The angel says that his name is “beyond understanding” (vs. 18). The same Hebrew phrase is translated in Isaiah 9:6 as “Wonderful,” applying to One who would come as “Mighty God.”

4. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Do a study on the “angel of the Lord” appearing in the Old Testament. Who was this? To whom did he appear and on what occasions?

5. The name “Samson” is derived from a Hebrew word meaning sun or brightness. Notice God’s purpose for Samson. *Nazirite* is from a Hebrew word meaning “separated” or “dedicated.” Read Numbers 6:1-8. What 3 things did a Nazirite vow to do that distinguished him as being set apart to God?

6. What was Mrs. Manoah’s responsibility while pregnant? Note how this scripture supports the value of the life of an unborn child before birth.

7. What was Manoah’s response, and what does he ask the Lord?

8. How does God respond to Manoah’s request? Notice the declaration of Manoah’s faith in Judges 13:12.

9. Discuss what happens in verses 15-21.

10. Before this, Manoah and his wife thought a “man of God” or prophet had appeared to her. When they realized an angel of the Lord had appeared to them (to her twice!), what do their individual responses (verses 22-23) reveal about their faith?

- Manoah —

- Mrs. Manoah —

11. Read 13:24-14:9. From the previous verses, we discovered that Manoah and his wife were a faithful, God-honoring couple. Their son had a life purpose to follow from birth. Discuss the kind of a son Samson turned out to be and what kind of disappointment this might have brought to his parents.

Scriptural Insight: “This was from the Lord” (verse 4) is evidence that the Lord uses even the sinful weaknesses of men to accomplish His purposes and bring praise to His name. Other instances are in Joshua 11:20 and 1 Kings 12:15. According to Judges 16:28-30 and Hebrews 11:32-34, God in His faithfulness strengthened Samson in his weakness.

12. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read the rest of Samson’s story in Judges 14:9-16:31. How many Nazirite vows did Samson break? NOTE: Mrs. Manoah had several more children after Samson. There is no indication that she had to follow the same dietary restraints for them.

13. ***Your Life's Journey:*** God gave Samson godly parents and special abilities to do the work that God had prepared for him to do. Yet, Samson made the choice to follow his own instincts rather than adhere to his family's faith and humility before God.

- If you are a parent or relative of a "prodigal" son or daughter, how do you feel about it?
- If you are a parent of a young child, do you fear that he will become a prodigal because you will do something wrong as a parent?
- Although no parent is perfect, remember that everyone makes her own decision whether or not to act on the knowledge of God she has received. Faith is an act of the will. Share with someone any fears or feelings of guilt and disappointment you might have. Commit that loved one to the Lord; pray for the "prodigal" to return to his or her God.

Day Two Study

Getting to know Hannah...

14. Read Deuteronomy 28:9-11; Psalm 127:3-5. In ancient Israel, children specifically were an indication of what?

15. Read 1 Samuel 1:1-19. How would you describe Hannah if you were there watching her?

16. Discuss everything that was causing Hannah distress.

17. Discuss Elkanah's response to his wife's distress.

18. **Your Life's Journey:** Elkanah's response does not seem to acknowledge Hannah's emotional needs. Does your husband or closest friend ever misunderstand your feelings? How do you react?

19. How did Hannah grow spiritually *because* of her barrenness? What did she learn about God?

Scriptural Insight: Vows are voluntary promises regarding personal commitment and piety. They were common in Old Testament times, were regulated by the Mosaic Law (Nu. 30), were expected to be carefully thought out (Pr. 20:25; Eccl. 5:4-6), and were expected to be fulfilled accompanied by thanksgiving offerings. Vows other than marriage vows are not generally taught or modeled in the New Testament (Paul's vow in Acts 18:18 being a holdover from his Jewish upbringing).

20. God uses prayer to get us into partnership with Him, and then we recognize His blessing. Hannah had a fallible High Priest (Eli) interceding for her. We have far more available to us as believers. Read the following verses and discuss who is helping us as we pray and how.

- Hebrews 4:14-16 —

- Hebrews 7:24-25 —

- Romans 8:26-27; 31-34 —

How does knowing this make you feel?

Scriptural Insight: God remembered Hannah (1 Samuel 1:19). To “remember” in the Bible is not merely to recall to mind. It is to express concern for someone, to act with loving care on their behalf.

21. **Your Life’s Journey:** Hannah had to endure her barrenness for some time because Peninah had at least 4 children. Sarah endured hers for at least 30 years! Do you consider yourself barren? Like Hannah, is it making you very sad? What should you do about your feelings / attitude? Is there some opportunity available today where you can use your time to minister to someone else with your built-in mothering instincts? Ask someone to pray with you about this.

22. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** A number of women are identified in Scripture without any reference to children at all. Try to find several and consider how they spent their time. Example: Priscilla, in Acts 18, discipled new believers, entertained guests, and taught the Scriptures.

Day Three Study

23. Read 1 Samuel 1:20-2:11. God gave Hannah a son. What did she do then?

24. Hannah’s prayer is her psalm of praise and thanksgiving. What emotions does she express, and what truths does she affirm about her God?

- Emotions —

- Truths —

From the Hebrew: Hannah's prayer song is prophetic, anticipating the establishment of kingship in Israel. Her son Samuel crowns the first king, Saul, as well as the second king, David. It also contains the first reference in the Bible to the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 2:10). "Anointed" is the Hebrew word *mashiyach* from which "Messiah" is derived. The Greek translation of this Hebrew term is *Christos*, from which comes the English word "Christ."

25. Read 1 Samuel 2:12-26. How did God continue to answer Hannah's prayer (1:10-11) even after she completed her vow?

26. In what kind of "home" did Hannah leave her boy?

27. Why didn't that terrify her? Refer back to 1:22-28. Whom could she trust? Why?

28. How did Hannah continue to mother her boy (2:19)?

29. Read 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1. Hannah's trust in the Lord was rewarded through His faithfulness to her son. List all the verses in 2:11-4:1 that reveal God's faithfulness to Samuel as he grew up as well as Samuel's response. Discuss how much God was involved in raising this boy.

Scriptural Insight: Samuel grew up to be the most respected Judge that Israel had.

30. **Your Life's Journey:** Are you in a situation where you have to be a mother from a distance? How does it make you feel? Have you talked to the Lord about it? Are you able to trust Him with that child? In what ways have you creatively cared for that child?

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved both Hannah and Mrs. Manoah. He knew what was going on in their lives. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not give Mrs. Manoah a peaceful land without invading enemies or a perfectly obedient son who sought to use his gifts for God's glory. Nor did God tell Hannah not to fulfill her vow and leave her son with Eli at the Tabernacle. Both endured years of barrenness before having children. Both were separated in some way from their firstborn sons. During their walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, Hannah and Mrs. Manoah chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded their faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. Likewise, God may not choose to answer your prayers quickly. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

31. Considering the little we know about Mrs. Manoah, how did she demonstrate her faith?

32. List everything that could have terrified Hannah. How did she respond to God by faith instead?

33. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Read Psalm 107:1-43. Notice the different kinds of people who call out to God and how He responds to them. Verse 43 says, "Whoever is wise, let him take note of these things! Let them consider the Lord's acts of loyal love!" Both of these women, Mrs. Manoah and Hannah, experienced God's love as He took care of them in specific situations. Write about the great love of the Lord for you and how He took care of you in 1 or 2 specific situations in your life.

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Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["Hannah-Believe that You Are Dearly Loved"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Hannah—Believe that You Are Dearly Loved

Grasp the fact that as a Christian you are dearly loved by your God.

One of the top internet search phrases leading people to the website Bible.org is this question, “What does God think about me?” That could be a natural question for anyone to ask who does not already know the Bible’s teachings. But, a lot of times, that question is wrapped up in mega insecurity, even among Christians. Perhaps this question is constantly rolling over in your mind. “What does God think about me?”

No wonder many women look at their lives, which may be very messy compared to others, and think to themselves, “God must not like me as much as He does her.” Have you ever thought that way? Then, you resign yourself to your “fate” because you don’t deserve better. Or, you do as many good deeds as you possibly can to try to get back into God’s good favor so He’ll love you again. Stop it! Grasp the fact that as a Christian **you are dearly loved** by your God. That’s what God thinks about you. And, God loves all of His children equally.

Grasping the truth that God loves you dearly

- Your God loves you, and He wants you to know it, to grasp it. To never let go of that truth.

*“I pray that ... [God] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in **love** may have power ... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the **love** of Christ, and to know this **love** ...” (Ephesians 3:16-19)*

- Christ already lives in the heart of every believer through the Holy Spirit. That word “dwell” means that Jesus is so at home in your heart that He is the dominating factor in your attitudes and behavior. And, Jesus wants you to be rooted and established in love—to be grounded in it, stabilized by it, to firmly grasp the immensity of how much you and I are loved! Jesus wants this to be deeply rooted in you. You can know this love intimately and experientially. It’s not just head knowledge. As a believer in Christ, you are an individual recipient of God’s personal love for His children.
- Through God’s power **in** you, you can GRASP God’s love **for** you. God enables you to overcome your insecurities and doubts and comparisons in order to know and experience His love. In Ephesians 5:1, we are called, “dearly loved children.” So, what does God think about you? **You are dearly loved.**

“There is nothing you can do to make God love you more! There is nothing you can do to make God love you less! His love is Unconditional, Impartial, Everlasting, Infinite, Perfect!” (Richard Halverson)

- God is not stingy with His love. The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, He **loves you dearly** just like that.

- Have you heard that God loves you but your brain is telling you, “No way!” Or, maybe you know in your head that God loves you, but you just don’t feel it in your heart. It’s okay to feel God’s love for you. God wants you to really KNOW it, to allow yourself to FEEL it, and to GRASP it. You can ask for this. Romans 5:5 says that God pours His love into your heart. It’s there for you to know.

The power of God overcomes what we’ve heard from others

- Has your concept of a Father’s love been corrupted by someone who should have shown you God’s kind of love? That affects your view of God and His love for you, especially if you only know performance-based love. Performance-based love says, “I will give my love to you if you meet a certain standard of performance. Otherwise, I will be disappointed in you and withhold my love.” That hurts. That breeds insecurity. Has that been your experience? That is not true love. That’s not how God’s love works.
- Think of the best father in any book, or movie or TV show. God is even better than that. God’s love is unconditional. He loves you for who you are now. He loves you for who you are becoming because He sees you perfected through His Spirit working in you. He looks upon you with love because you have trusted in His Son. His love allows things in your life that will strengthen you and mature you as you learn to rely on Him more. The Bible says that you are “**dearly loved**.”

What God says about you

- Dear friends, write this phrase on your mirror. “**You are dearly loved by your Father God.**” And put Ephesians 5:1 and Colossians 3:12 below that.
- The next time you ponder what God says or thinks about you, remember this truth. It doesn’t matter how many mistakes you’ve made in the past or what’s in your bank account. Whether you’ve been a Christian for 3 weeks or 30 years, you are dearly loved.

You are dearly loved by your Father God—equally, no more, no less than every other Christian alive today or in the past.

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8 Abigail & Bathsheba — Two Wives

Time: United Kingdom ~1010-900 B.C.

"But he said to me, 'My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong." 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

The establishment of the monarchy was a momentous event in Israel's history. As we study this era, we must not conclude that the monarchy itself was wrong. Centuries before, God had predicted that a king would rule over Israel. But in requesting the monarchy, Israel's motives and timing were wrong (1 Sam 8). She blamed her problems on the absence of a king, not on her sin. She cast her eyes on her pagan neighbors rather than on God. If Israel had simply been patient, the monarchy would have come. Within a few years, David, the Judean shepherd boy, came onto the scene. Had Israel waited a bit longer, God would have placed the son of Jesse on the throne. But Israel's impatience brought Saul to the throne. Physically impressive, Saul was the picture of a king. For many years, he strengthened his nation, until pride welled up in his heart. His subsequent sin led to judgment, and Saul died a tragic death on the mountains of Gibeon.

David's reign ushered in the golden age of Israel. He unified the nation, established a strong government, and built the most powerful empire of his day. He conquered Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Syria. Philistia submitted to his authority. As the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," David received God's special blessing. He would be the ancestor of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. His leadership was decisive and effective. He captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it his royal city and residence. Shortly afterward, he brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, publicly acknowledging the Lord's kingship and rule over himself and the nation. The nation prospered, defeated its enemies, and extended its borders from Egypt to the Euphrates. The Lord announced that He would establish the line of kings through David.

About 10 years after David was established in the city of Jerusalem, David's weaknesses and failures began to be revealed. Even though David remained a man after God's own heart, he nevertheless fell short of the ideal king. His sin with Bathsheba and his leniency both with the wickedness of his sons and with the insubordination of one of his advisors led to intrigue, violence, and bloodshed within his own family and the nation.

1. Read 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 16:1-13, 18. What information is given about God's choice of David and anointing him as king?

-
2. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** For more insight into the character of David, read the rest of 1 Samuel 16 through chapter 24. This section sets the stage for our lesson on Abigail.

Getting to know Abigail...

King Saul, jealous of God's choice of David, spent the latter part of his life chasing and trying to kill David. The story of Abigail is sandwiched between two incidents where David used self-restraint to spare Saul's life because Saul was the Lord's anointed.

3. Read 1 Samuel 25:1-13. Describe Nabal and Abigail.

- Nabal —

- Abigail —

4. Discuss the kind of marriage and home life Abigail and Nabal might have had based on what is mentioned about them so far.

5. Compare David's request to Nabal's response. [NOTE: Nabal's pastureland was about a mile away from his home.]

6. Read 1 Samuel 25:14-35. From information in these verses, add to your description of Abigail's qualities.

7. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Abigail didn't panic. Perhaps she was accustomed to such calamities given her husband's character! Would you have panicked? Have you ever been in such a dangerous (or perceived dangerous) situation? How did you get through it?

Day Two Study

8. Read 1 Samuel 25:14-35. Why didn't Abigail tell her husband what she was going to do?
9. Abigail provides us with a successful pattern for dealing with confrontation. Discuss her strategy in appeasing David and her conversation with him.
10. Read 1 Samuel 25:36-44. Once the danger was thwarted, how did Abigail deal with her husband?

11. How did Abigail do what was right for her husband, household, and David while “not giving way to fear”?

12. How did the Lord deal with Nabal?

13. What signs do you see of spiritual maturity in Abigail’s life in spite of living in such a difficult situation?

Scriptural Insight: Within two weeks, Abigail’s life was totally changed. David married Abigail and traveled with her (and his other wife Ahinoam) for two years. Abigail had one son as David’s wife—Chileab. Nothing more is known of Abigail or her son beyond this.

14. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. How does God use difficulties to shape us?

15. Abigail probably lived in the constant stress of unresolved conflict. How might that have affected her attitudes and feelings?

Think About It: Abigail “refused to be a victim of circumstances she can’t fully change. Instead she changes what she can.” (Lisa TerKeurst, *Uninvited*)

16. **Your Life's Journey:** Someone in your small group, perhaps yourself, may live in this kind of relationship. Fear and wrong attitudes can be as harmful as the abuse itself. When we react wrongly to people who mistreat us, we really let them control us.

- What advice could you give to a woman in such a situation? See 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:6-10; 2 Timothy 1:7
- If it is yourself in such a situation, reach out to someone and let her pray for the situation as well as for your attitudes and responses.

Day Three Study

Getting to know Bathsheba (about 15 years later)...

17. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5. What information about Bathsheba can be gleaned from these verses?

18. In what two situations did Bathsheba find herself, and how did she respond in each?

Scriptural Insight: Bathsheba's grandfather was one of David's counselors. Her father was one of David's bodyguards. She was married to a Gentile, one of David's royal guards, who must have adopted Israelite customs. Consider the impact of familiarity on this incident. The Bible does not call this rape as it does in other situations (2 Samuel 13:14). Bathsheba succumbed to David's advances.

19. Read 2 Samuel 11:6-25. Contrast Bathsheba's husband Uriah to Abigail's husband Nabal.

20. What did David's actions cost Bathsheba?

21. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Remembering how Abigail prevented an angry David from doing evil, do you think Bathsheba could have likewise appealed to David?

22. Read 2 Samuel 11:26-12:25. How did God view what David did to Bathsheba and Uriah?

Scriptural Insight: The author [of 2 Samuel] points his accusing finger at David, not Bathsheba. It was not Bathsheba's indiscretion in bathing herself, for she was simply obeying the ritual of purification outlined in the law—in the evening when the sun is setting. It is nearly dark. It was David who, by means of his lofty elevation and view, looked inappropriately at Bathsheba, violating her privacy. The sequence of sin in David's life does not end with his adulterous union with Bathsheba. It leads to a deceptive plot to make her husband Uriah appear to be the father of David's child with Bathsheba and culminates in David's murder of Uriah and his marriage to Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. (Bob Deffinbaugh, "David and Uriah," Bible.org)

23. Based on 2 Samuel 12:10-14, what did the prophet Nathan say would be the consequences of this sin, both immediate and long-term? Was David the only one who would suffer? Explain.

Scriptural Insight: Psalm 51 is David's heartfelt repentance (agreement with God about his sin and decision to change his behavior). It reveals his tender heart for God. Also, of all David's wives, God chose Bathsheba to bear David's successor, Solomon. She joined two other women with marred reputations, Tamar and Rahab, in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1: 6-17).

24. How did God show His goodness to both David & Bathsheba after the baby died?

25. Read 1 Kings 1:1-35; 2:13-25; and 1 Chronicles 3:4-5. What other information do you glean about Bathsheba as a woman?

26. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read the rest of 2 Samuel to see how Nathan's prophecy came true.

27. **Your Life's Journey:**

- Perhaps you had an immoral relationship with your husband (or other person) before marriage or caused a first marriage to be broken up by your relationship to each other, and you are feeling guilty or fearful of the consequences. Agree with God that you have sinned. Accept the forgiveness He provided through His Son Jesus for *all* your sins—past, present, and future—then forgive yourself and the other person. Then, ask the other person to forgive your part in the past.
- Read Psalm 103:10-14. God has already removed your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. You will still have to deal with the consequences of your actions, but thanks be to Christ, not the guilt! *Romans 8:1* says, “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” Are you able to trust God to help you even through the consequences of sin? If not, ask someone you trust to pray for you regarding this.

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Abigail and Bathsheba. He knew what was going on in their lives. Marriage difficulties, the temptations they faced, the losses they suffered—He was there for all of it. He was able to do something about it. Abigail's life was spared by using the strengths God gave her. Bathsheba, though she suffered the consequences of sin, was blessed with the birth of Solomon, heir to the throne. During their walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, Abigail and Bathsheba chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. Likewise, God may not choose to relieve you from a difficult marriage or prevent you from experiencing the consequences of sin (yours or someone else's). But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

28. List the situations that could have terrified Abigail. How did she respond to God in faith?

29. What opportunities did Bathsheba have to fear? How did she respond to God in faith?

30. **Your Life's Journey:** Scripture describes both Abigail and Bathsheba as being beautiful women. God creates beauty so this is a good thing. In his commentary, Matthew Henry wrote, "The fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul." What does the Bible teach about the relationship between physical beauty and a person's character? See Proverbs 31:10, 30; 1 Peter 3:1-6, and any other verses you can find to support your answer.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["Abigail-Having a Wise Heart"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

Abigail—Having a Wise Heart

God is glad when our hearts are wise. Wisdom from Proverbs.

Wisdom & A Woman's Heart

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

- In biblical language, the heart is the center of the human spirit. Our emotions, thoughts, motivations, and actions—the wellspring of life—all of those things spring from our hearts. *"We all possess knowledge. But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know."* (1 Corinthians 8:1)
- Knowledge is proud that it has learned so much. But, it's not being smart that makes us wise! It's our hearts—your choices and my choices of what to do with what we know! God's desire for us as women is that we have wise hearts!

The Foolish Woman: What kind of heart does she have?

- The foolish woman's heart is undisciplined and ruled by her emotions. She acknowledges nothing of truth. She is self-centered, wanting prominence and seeking attention. She offers excitement to those around her but delivers danger. She's empty. She lacks discretion. Her heart is willfully destructive with no thought for consequences. It sucks the life out of those around her. *Proverbs 9:13-18; Proverbs 11:22; Proverbs 30:15*
- Women like this never seem to learn the lesson of how to make good choices. And, their bad choices affect those who live around them.

The Contentious Woman: What kind of heart does she have?

- The contentious woman's heart is quarrelsome. It stirs up trouble and is ill-tempered. That involves complaining, whining, & nagging. Being in her presence is as aggravating as a constant drip-drip-drip from the faucet. She drives away family. Her heart has determined to be contentious! *Proverbs 27:15-16; Proverbs 19:13; Proverbs 21:9, 19*
- The contentious woman is not necessarily lazy or undisciplined like the foolish woman. She might be a perfectionist or overachiever. Perfectionists can be very contentious.

"Perfectionists are people who not only hold unrealistically high standards but also judge themselves or others as always falling short. The thing about perfectionists is that they don't ever experience satisfaction...Nothing is ever good enough."

- You know women like this who are never satisfied. Maybe this describes you. God expects faithfulness from us, not perfection. Having a contentious heart is not good.

The Immoral Woman: What kind of heart does she have?

- Proverbs 7 describes the immoral woman as defiant, restless, deliberate, and scheming. She rejects and deserts her covenant partner. Her heart is seductive, persuading others for evil. And, she denies accountability for her behavior. *Proverbs 7:5-23; Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-6; 6:24-29; 12:4; 20:16; 22:14; 23:27-28*

"This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I've done nothing wrong.'" (Proverbs 30:20)

- A woman who is deliberately doing this behavior may have spent years of gradually letting herself be drawn into this kind of heart and lifestyle.

The Wise Woman: What kind of heart does she have?

- The wise woman's heart is kindhearted and respectful. She is described as someone who builds up her household or family. She firmly establishes it, causing it to continue. Her heart is others-focused, and she sees the long-term consequences of her actions.

"The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." (Proverbs 14:1)

- The description of the woman in Proverbs 31 is a practical application of Proverbs 14:1. It is a poem that uses examples from a middle-class woman's daily life around the time of Abigail and Bathsheba. This poem illustrates what a wise heart looks like in the everyday life of a woman who is building her house, not tearing it down. This poem assumes an educated woman—that she had the skills needed for her life in her world.

What kind of heart do you want to have?

- God's desire for you is that you have a wise heart. That begins with a faith relationship with Him. Then, have an attitude of seeking to learn from Him and choose to approach life God's way. Not the world's way or your own way. He wants to help you make wise choices because He loves you.
- It takes practice and skill to learn any craft. It also takes practice to live God's way. Plan how you will improve your skills by learning Bible verses that lead to having a wise heart.
- Anticipate what will be your biggest hindrance. You know where you struggle and why. Ask God to enable you to overcome that. You are not alone. You have a God who loves you and has already given you the resources you need to become a wise woman.
- The Holy Spirit living inside of all Christians gives you access to the wisdom from God moment by moment. So, you can approach God humbly and ask Him for what you need to fulfill your purpose as a woman, wife, mother, or grandmother.

You can walk from fear to faith with a wise heart.

9 Two Widows — Single with Children

Time: Divided Kingdom-Israel ~900-722 B.C.

“So then, don’t worry saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.” MATTHEW 6:31-34

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

David reigned on the throne of Israel for 40 years. Solomon, who was God’s choice to inherit his father’s throne, strengthened Israel’s defenses, conducted trade throughout the known world, and engaged in numerous building operations including a magnificent temple for God and a massive palace for himself. Famed for his wisdom, which he requested and received from God, Solomon wrote the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. But tempted by his foreign wives, Solomon unwisely turned his heart away from God. As a result, God promised judgment upon Solomon’s death—the kingdom would be divided.

Here’s how it happened: For centuries friction had existed between the northern and southern tribes. This friction was evident throughout David’s reign. From 1010 to 1003 B.C., David ruled over the southern tribes (Judah), while the northern ten tribes (Israel) supported Saul’s son Ishbosheth. Following Ishbosheth’s death, Israel accepted David as king (2 Samuel 5) but then rebelled briefly toward the end of his life (2 Samuel 20).

As Solomon inherited David’s kingdom, the seeds of discontent became apparent. The Israelites chafed under heavy taxation and forced labor. Upon Solomon’s death, they sought relief, which finally came but only through permanent division. The prophet Ahijah appeared to one of Solomon’s officials, Jeroboam (1 Kings 11), and prophesied the divided kingdom, ordaining Jeroboam king over Israel. Solomon’s son Rehoboam proved himself foolish and unworthy to rule, and the northern tribes rallied around Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). When the dust cleared, the United Kingdom was no more. Jeroboam, however, refused to obey God’s Word. He founded a renegade religious system and led his nation on the pathway to ruin. Israel’s history featured religious apostasy and unstable leadership. Godless kings turned the people away from their God. Sin always brings judgment, and in 722 B.C. the Assyrians destroyed Samaria, Israel’s capital, bringing the Northern Kingdom to an end.

Besides godless kings, Israel’s history also featured religious apostasy characterized by an ineffective or nonexistent priesthood. God called men to become His mouthpiece, that is, receiving a message directly from God and proclaiming it to God’s people. Unlike the priest or the king, the Hebrew prophet did not inherit his office. He received his calling directly from God. Some examples are Jeremiah before birth (Jer. 1:5), Samuel as a young boy (1 Sam. 3), and Amos as a farmer (Amos 1:1). The prophet’s life was usually difficult, sometimes involving grave physical abuse. Jeremiah was held captive in a muddy pit, and according to tradition Isaiah was sawn in half.

Ahab ruled Israel in the middle 800's B.C—the 6th king after Jeroboam. His kingship made idolatry a household accepted practice. An idol is any human-created God substitute. Idolatry is giving glory to something else that belongs only to God. Israel's idolatry was particularly the worship of Baal—one of the leading Canaanite gods. Baal, whose name meant simply "lord," was considered the god of storms and thus of fertility, for the rain he supposedly sent watered the crops and provided a bountiful harvest. The prophet Elijah lived during this time. Elijah's name (meaning "The LORD is my God") was the essence of his message.

1. Read Exodus 20:2-6 and Deuteronomy 11:13-17. What did God promise to Israel if they set up idol worship?
2. Read James 5:17 and 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah prayed according to God's promise (Deut. 11:16-17), and then he told Ahab about it.
 - What do you think was God's point by Elijah's message in 1 Kings 17:1?
 - According to James 5:17, how did God answer Elijah's prayer?
 - Why would this challenge the people's idolatry?
3. Imagine that kind of drought. How would God's answer to Elijah's prayer affect the land and people in Israel and surrounding nations as well as on himself?

Think About It: Sometimes when we pray for the Lord to draw unbelievers to Him, the believers have to suffer the consequences as well. Is it worth it?

4. Read 1 Kings 17:1-6. What did Elijah learn about God's creative provision in a tough time?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 and Philippians 4:10-20. What do you learn about God's provision from these verses?

6. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Describe a time in your life when God creatively provided for you as things looked hopeless—whether it was physical, emotional, or spiritual provision. Be sure to include what it was like to trust Him for that provision.

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Day Two Study

Getting to know the widow of Zarephath...

Zarephath was located between the two cities, Tyre and Sidon, on the Mediterranean Coast northwest of Israel. This was Gentile territory and, specifically, the home of Ahab's queen Jezebel and Baal worship.

7. Read 1 Kings 17:7-16. Based on the information given, what words would you use to describe the Widow of Zarephath if you were there watching her?

Spiritual Insight: The meaning of commanded is “chosen, planned.” It was God’s decree. God was not bound by His covenant with the Jews to bless this Gentile woman. But, He did. God’s grace and mercy is always available to individuals.

8. What was her problem, and how was she trying to deal with it?

9. What might have been her emotions at this time?

10. What did Elijah ask the widow to do?

Think About It: “Receiving promises requires obedience.” (Ron Holton, pastor of Rockpointe Church, January 2017)

11. List the many ways that her faith and obedience were rewarded. [NOTE: Only a true God can provide flour and oil in a drought!]

12. **Your Life’s Journey:** Elijah stayed with the widow and her son, eating flour and oil cakes twice a day for almost 3 years. Imagine that. A modern-day equivalent could be peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. As I heard someone say recently, we can get so used to our blessings that we complain about them. Think about how long you could stay grateful while eating those twice a day for 3 years! Reflect on the words of the song below.

Had a lot of dreams that never came true. Things I could have done, but never got the chance to do. When I couldn’t see the path of the storm your wisdom wouldn’t let me go that way. And it broke my heart, but now my heart can say...Thank you for the times you said, No. Thank you for the doors that you closed. All the ways

you never let me go and the things you never gave me. So many times I didn't understand and wouldn't let you take my hand. But now I want to fall at Your feet and thank you for the things you never gave me. ("Things You Never Gave Me" by David Meece)

How grateful are you for what the Lord has already done in your life? Do you thank Him for the times He says, "No"? See Colossians 1:11-12; 2:7; 3:15-17.

13. Read 1 Kings 17:17-24. What was her problem now, and how did she respond?

14. What do you think she meant by saying, "Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

Focus on the Meaning: This is a common reaction among people who do not know God's ways well when personal tragedy hits their lives. It's the pagan view of life: "When things go well, the gods are pleased with me. When things go wrong, the gods are angry with me." Jesus declares in Matthew 5:45 that God sends sunshine and rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous equally. It was not her sin but God's opportunity to take this woman another step along her faith walk, making it personal.

15. Discuss Elijah's response and how God answered Elijah's prayer.

16. Read Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3-4. Why does God perform miracles? Did it work this time?

17. Read Matthew 6:31-34. Apply this passage to today's lesson.

18. ***Your Life's Journey:*** Through a near tragedy, this woman came to know the living God in a personal way. Do you know of someone who turned to the Lord only after exhausting all her/his other resources? When might it be good to pray for someone to reach desperate circumstances? What if those desperate circumstances might involve you as well?

Day Three Study

Getting to know the prophet's widow...

Elijah served God as His prophet and priest in the northern kingdom for many years. He mentored Elisha, a farmer's son, to help him and continue the ministry after Elijah was taken to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-25). Three characteristics distinguished God's true prophet: 1) He was loyal to Yahweh alone, 2) His predictions came to pass, 3) His message agreed with previous revelations. The performance of miracles was not the primary test, because false prophets could perform miracles through the power of Satan (Deuteronomy 13:1-2).

19. Read 2 Kings 4:1-7.

- What was this woman's crisis situation?
- How did she deal with it?

Historical Insight: The widow's husband had been part of the company of prophets who remained faithful to God. The company of prophets can be considered similar to modern seminaries where men and women learn from distinguished God-gifted teachers such as Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. One community of prophets was located at Bethel, just north of Jerusalem.

20. The Mosaic Law provided for paying off debts by working. See Leviticus 25:39-41. How did God limit this practice?

21. Read Deuteronomy 10:17-18; Psalm 68:4-5. What does God promise to do for the widows and orphans?

22. Read Exodus 22:22, 23; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 24:19-22 to see how God would use the community to provide for widows and orphans. What was God's plan?

23. The widow sought Elisha, God's representative to her. List all the things that Elisha commanded her to do.

- First (verses 3-4) —
- Next (verse 7) —

Historical Insight: Olive oil was expensive and time-consuming to make. It was used for cooking, lighting lamps, dressing wounds, and as a deodorant when water wasn't available for bathing. The wealthy used it for bathing and as a skin softener. It was also used for anointing kings and the dead for burial as well as for ritual offerings. The widow had a valuable commodity.

24. When Elisha told the widow to ask her neighbors for jars, what could have been the benefits of doing so...

- to them?
- to her?

25. How do you think this incident impacted her sons?

26. Looking at the kind of help this woman had sought from God and what she actually received, how did God “defend her cause” (Deuteronomy 10:18)?

27. **Your Life’s Journey:** Read 1 Timothy 5:3-8,16; James 1:27; and Romans 12:13.

- As followers of Christ, what does God expect of us as women in our homes, church, and community to help the needy?
- In today’s society, who would be considered widows? What do they need besides material provisions?
- Study these passages and ask God to reveal a specific area where He wants you to be obedient to Him as you reach out to meet the need of someone in your sphere of influence.

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved the two widows and their children. He knew what was going on in their lives. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not give the widows their husbands back nor did He prevent them from having to go through the agony of watching food supplies dwindle or facing threats from a creditor. His provision was not luxurious foods or easy money. During their walk, a loving God said no to some things. Yet, they chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded their faith with an outpouring of His blessing. Likewise, God may not choose to resuscitate your dead loved ones. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

28. What kind of fears did the widow living in Zarephath face? How did she respond to God by faith?

29. What could have terrified the prophet's widow? How did she demonstrate faith?

30. **Your Life's Journey:** Often, we overlook what God has already provided for us and concentrate instead on what we don't have. Notice that God used what both women already had as a resource. How has God done this in your life?

Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["Two Widows-Recognize God's Provision"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Two Widows—Recognize God's Provision

Think differently about God's provision for you.

Lesson #1: God's provision is His to give and take away. Regard it humbly.

Everything we have comes from God.

- There isn't anything we own that we did not receive from God. *1 Corinthians 4:7*
- Yet, we humans boastfully live as though we had anything to do with our genetics or privileges at all. When they are stripped away, we resent being stripped of our "rights."

What we have is not a measure of our goodness or our faith.

- How God chooses to provide for you or for me at any time in our lives is His sovereign choice.
- When God removes our comforts and strips away our support, we actually begin to depend upon Him as God Almighty—as **essential to our lives**, not just an appendage. Don't let anyone deceive you by equating prosperity with your measure of faith.

God determines our provision—the how, when, and why

- Most of the time, God's provision is going to come through people, not miraculously appear from the sky.
- God chooses how He provides for His own. We must learn to trust whatever manner He chooses.

Our provision belongs to God. Hold onto it loosely.

"The God who gave the water has chosen to take the water. It's His sovereign right! He gives the child; He can take it away. He gives the business; He can take it away. He gives the house; He can take it away." (Chuck Swindoll, sermon series on Elijah)

Lesson #2: God's provision is always enough. Receive it gratefully.

The sufficiency of God's enough

- When you have the Lord's provision, you lack nothing that you need at this time in your life. It's what you have, not what you don't have. Rejoice at what you have instead of complaining about what you don't have. *Deuteronomy 2:7; Deuteronomy 8:7-9a*

The creativity of God's enough

- When you receive God's provision, you learn that He is creative and personal. God doesn't do the same thing for everyone. Both of the widows in the lesson learned to follow God's directions even when it made no sense. Your hope is to be in your God. Not in prosperity—current or future.

Lesson #3: God's provision is meant to be shared. Give it generously.***Compassion is not feeling; it is doing.***

- It is doing something to ease someone's pain, whether it's for this week or more. Most times of need last longer than a day! God's plan for the needy in Israel was that perfectly good food was **purposely** left in the fields for the poor to have. That's being proactive.

Compassion requires trusting God, not having plenty. (2 Corinthians 8:2)

- There is a fine line between good stewardship of the provisions God's given today and not trusting God enough to be able to share it. *2 Corinthians 8:2*

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." (2 Corinthians 8:2)

It is not what you'd do with a million, if riches should ever be your lot. But what are you doing at present with the dollar and a quarter you've got?

Compassion shares God's riches flowing through us.

- Whether you are the receiver or the giver, how you do both should be **different** than what the world does.
- God's riches to us are supplied through us to meet another's needs.

Compassion is personal.

- Have you experienced the joy of deliberately and delightfully meeting the specific needs of a person with a name and a face you know? It's love in action.

Lesson #4: God's provision brings Him glory. Praise Him openly.

- Openly share how God has creatively provided for you in a tough time. As you do so, that is giving Him praise. When you acknowledge that what you have comes from God, whether much or little, that is giving Him glory. Every time you tell about it, thank Him. Ask God to give you frequent opportunity to tell that story and give Him praise.

Whenever there doesn't seem to be enough, remember our four truths to stand strong in those tough times.

Those are important on your walk from fear to faith.

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10

Woman of Shunem — A Story to Tell

Time: Divided Kingdom-Israel ~900-722 B.C.

“Now the king was talking to Gehazi, the prophet’s servant, and said, ‘Tell me all the great things which Elisha has done.’ While Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had brought the dead back to life, the woman whose son he had brought back to life came to ask the king for her house and field. Gehazi said, ‘My master, O king, this is the very woman and this is her son whom Elisha brought back to life!’ The king asked the woman about it, and she gave him the details.” 2 KINGS 8:4-6a

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

God’s concern for women and their special needs is clearly seen in the scriptures we’ve studied so far. While women were regarded as inferior to men in most ancient Near Eastern societies, God demonstrated His compassion for them in many different ways.

Elisha, God’s prophet to Israel and successor to Elijah, ministered in and around Mt. Carmel on the western edge of the Plain of Jezreel—a strategic area of Israel and a fruitful farming valley. Shunem was a little town in this valley about ~20 miles away from Mt. Carmel. This little village was not far from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up centuries later.

Getting to know the woman of Shunem...

1. Read 2 Kings 4:8-17. Describe this woman. List everything you can infer from the text.
2. How did she approach her husband with her idea?

Scriptural Insight: A few years earlier, the prophet Elijah thought no faithful worshiper of God was left in Israel but himself. God reassured Elijah that 7,000 people remained in Israel who had not “bowed their knees” to Baal. Those Israelites were still faithful to God alone. Perhaps the Shunammite woman and her husband came from families who were part of that 7,000.

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3. How did Elisha respond to their generosity (verses 11-13)?
 4. What need did she withhold, and why do you think she withheld it?
 5. How does Elisha find out about her unexpressed need?
 6. What does Elisha, as God's representative, do about her need, and what did the woman learn about God as a result?
 7. **Your Life's Journey:** Homemaking is a ministry. For her, it all started with a meal—extending hospitality—and thus supporting Elisha's ministry. Home is wherever you live. Whether your career is that of "homemaker" or not, women are particularly gifted by God to establish the warmth of a home—emotional and otherwise. Do you consider your "homemaking" as a ministry and your "home" as a ministry tool? Share a time when God has given you opportunity to use your home to minister to someone else.

8. **Your Life's Journey:** The Shunammite woman and her husband gladly took care of Elisha's needs. What should be our attitude toward our pastors and Bible teachers? Read Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 5:17-18. How can you better serve those who are dedicating their lives to serving you? Write a prayer of thanks to God for specific ones.

Day Two Study

About 5 or more years later...

9. Read 2 Kings 4:18-37. Many farmers lived in town and went out to the country daily to work. What crisis happened on this work day, and how did this woman respond to the crisis?
10. What might be the reasons for not telling her husband or Elisha's servant Gehazi that her son had died?
11. **Your Life's Journey:** It seems this determined woman only wanted Elisha who represented God to her at this time. While there are times when family and friends can help us, God wants us to bring our deepest needs to Him alone. Read Hebrews 4:14-16 and 10:19-23. Describe the last time when you faced a crisis that only God could handle. Did you confidently bring your need to Him? Were you able to trust Him with the outcome? Why or why not?
12. In what ways did Elisha demonstrate his respect for this woman?

13. Where did Elisha get his ability to raise the boy from the dead? How do you know?

Think About It: God poured out miracles through Elijah and Elisha to Israel during their lifetimes. Perhaps it was to get the attention of His people for His message. There was no other true spiritual leadership in Israel at this time, and Baal worship encroached continually.

14. After reading today's selection, what other adjectives would you add in your description of this woman?

15. **Your Life's Journey:** Though living in the midst of wicked, unfaithful Israel, this woman and her husband chose to remain faithful to God. God honored their faith by giving them opportunity to respond to His word through Elisha whenever he came to their town. We live in a culture that finds Christianity, as well as God's standards of moral law, repulsive—choosing instead its own self-gratification as a substitute for worship of the true God. We are surrounded by idolatry and corrupt teaching. What steps do you need to take to remain faithful to God alone? How are you doing this?

Day Three Study

At least 7 years later...

16. Read 2 Kings 8:1-6. In verse 1, how did God show His faithfulness to the Shunammite woman and her family?

17. After obeying the words of Elisha for 7 years, she returns to Israel.

- Now, what challenge was she facing (verse 3)?
- How did she respond to the problem?

Historical Insight: It was possible for Israelites to bypass lower judicial officials and appeal directly to the king. Either someone had illegally occupied the woman's property or it had fallen to the domain of the king by virtue of its abandonment. And, remember that the king of Israel (possibly Jehu) was not a godly king. He was a newly crowned king who was unfamiliar with Elisha.

18. What did the king do for her?

19. In what ways has God shown His faithfulness to this woman in her past, in her present and for her future?

20. After reading this passage, why do you think God allowed the family in Shunem to experience the crisis in 2 Kings 4?

21. Do you believe the woman's sudden appearance before the king was a coincidence? If not, what does it tell you about our God?

22. **Your Life's Journey:** We don't even know her name. But, God does. And, He included her story in His written Word for our benefit.

- What inspires you about this woman?
- Do you know any women today like this? How do they inspire you?

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved this woman and her family. He knew what was going on in their lives. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not make the woman's husband young again nor did He prevent her from having to endure the stigma of barrenness for a time. He didn't prevent the famine from affecting their family. During her walk, a loving God said no to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, He rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing on her family. Likewise, God may not choose to fix your crisis so you experience no pain. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

23. What situations could have brought fear into this woman's life?

24. How did she respond to God by faith? Give specific instances and verse references.

25. **TELL YOUR STORY:** God gave this woman a story of His faithfulness to her, and He gave her opportunity to share it with an ungodly king! God has given you a story to tell of His faithfulness to you. Review the various parts of your story that you have already written in the previous lessons. Choose one or two to expand into “Your Story” to share of your faith walk with God, especially your WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH. We’ve given you two blank pages at the end to work on it. Think in terms of what you can share in about 5 minutes. Then ask God to give you opportunities to share your story!

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Shunammite-Declare God's Faithfulness”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

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Shunammite Woman—Declare God's Faithfulness

God uses us as light-bearers to declare His faithfulness and lead other people to Him.

Light-bearers declare God's faithfulness

"You are ... a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

- We are chosen to be God's mouthpiece to the world around us like the prophets of the Old Testament. Our purpose is to declare what He has done in our own lives to those who cannot see the light, to those still gripped by fear. Do you know someone like that? Do you remember being like that?
- Evidence of human distress is everywhere around us. Women are in bondage to guilt, fear, destructive behavior, fatigue and disappointment. Any wrong views they have about God leave them feeling empty, confused, and without meaning and purpose. Failure in relationships leaves women with a sense of rejection, worthlessness and extreme loneliness. As people walk around in their blindness-darkness, they are groping along the walls to find their way to a door that will free them of their fear and give them purpose in life. God's plan to meet that need for every woman is a relationship with Himself through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.
- Our God sent His Son Jesus into the world to lead the way out of the darkness. In fact, Jesus declared Himself to be the light of the world, giving sight to the spiritually blind. But, now He chooses to use us—frail, faltering, headstrong, often self-centered humans. He chooses messy people to be his light-bearers and messengers of love to the blind and fearful people on this earth.
- We are called to say, "The light is this way. Let me help you find the light. God is waiting to rescue you from your prison of fear and darkness and bring you into His wonderful light. You will find warmth and peace and enjoy a life of freedom and joy with Him."
- We communicate to those around us who are enshrouded in darkness that God is real and available to anyone who wants Him.

The Gospel is the good news about God's faithfulness

- The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ coming to earth to save us from our sins. Christianity is Christ! It's all about a relationship with Him.

"Jesus Christ **laid down** His life **for** you so that he could **give** His life **to** you so that he could **live** His life **through** you." (Major Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*)

- If you have opportunity to tell someone one thing, tell her about Jesus.
 - Tell her that God loves her and wants a relationship with her. But, sin separates her from God's love.
 - Tell her that Jesus is God, who came to earth as a man, and died for her sins.
 - Tell her that she can be completely forgiven of her sins and receive eternal life with God simply by believing in Jesus as her Savior.
- That is the gospel. It's a treasure that we have. And, it is too powerful and valuable to keep to ourselves. We must share it!

Declare your story of God's faithfulness

- People love to hear stories. As you have learned to trust God's goodness in whatever things that are threatening you or causing you fear, and journaled about it, you now have a story to share. It's your personal story about your faith in a faithful God. Sharing your story is a simple way to speak about God's love for you and how He works in your life. You can bring hope to someone who needs it.
- How did you first hear about Jesus? Did someone tell you? We get the awesome privilege of sharing that good news with others. There is tremendous joy in reaching out to those who do not know Jesus and introducing them to Him so they can know Him just as you now know Him.
- Imagine you had cancer and were chosen to be part of a special test group for a new cure. The treatment cured all of your cancer completely free of charge. What is the first thing you would do after you were healed? You would blast it all over Facebook, telling all of the other cancer victims about this great cure! Well, sin is a cancer affecting every single person. And you have been cured—forgiven of your sins—by your faith in Jesus Christ.
- Do you remember how you felt before you believed in Jesus? Maybe you felt lonely, guilty, and without hope. The entire world is lost without Him. Jesus chooses to have His followers tell His story—what He does for them and through them.

You have a story to share about your walk from fear to faith. Your story illustrates the power of God in your life. It illustrates His faithfulness to you that helped you let go of your fear and trust His goodness. You do not need to be an expert in the Bible or have years of experience as a Christian. Just share what you know.

God will continue to show His faithfulness to you as you walk from fear to faith.

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11 Esther — Woman of Courage

Time Period: Captivity and Restoration ~609-400 B.C.

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" ESTHER 4:14

Day One Study

Historical Perspective

With the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, Judah remained alone. She had been able to escape an early ruin because the Davidic dynasty remained stable, many of Judah's kings were godly (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah), and zealous prophets exhorted Judah to love and obey God. Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea had ministered to Israel. Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah poured out their messages of repentance and faith upon Judah.

Wicked kings, however, like Ahaz and Manasseh damaged the moral fiber of the people. The idolatrous worship of foreign gods (Baal and Molech especially) remained a temptation. Yet Judah remained strong until the reign of Manasseh, whose destructive influence so undermined the nation (Jeremiah 15:2-4) that not even godly Josiah could rescue her from the downward slide. With the death of Josiah in 609 BC, Judah's end came quickly. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, made three incursions into Judah—the last bringing total destruction. Jerusalem, including the Temple and the palace, lay in total ruin; her people carried off into captivity in Babylon. The exiled Judeans were treated with some measure of respect in Babylon. Some became prosperous businessmen; some rose to political power (Daniel and his friends). The prophets Daniel and Jeremiah held out hope for Israel's return according to God's promise.

In 539 B.C. Babylon fell to the Persian monarch Cyrus the Great. Nearly two centuries before, Isaiah had predicted the rise of Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1). When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he decreed that God's people could return to Judea and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Three groups of people returned—the first led by Zerubbabel in 537 BC, the second led by Ezra 80 years later, and the third group came with Nehemiah 15 years after that. The new temple was completed in 516 BC. The events in the book of Esther concerned those who remained in Babylon between the time of Zerubbabel and Ezra.

Malachi's ministry marked the conclusion of the Old Testament direct revelation from God. For 400 years, there was silence until the birth of Jesus. God was not through with His people, though. He still intervened and directed the history of Israel through that 400 years.

1. Read the following accounts of what the people endured during the 70 years between being taken captive and the edict which pronounced their freedom. What information is given in each passage about God's part?
 - 2 Chronicles 36:15-23 —

-
- Ezra 1:1-11 —

2. Read Ezra 4:4-24. What attitude toward the Jews was beginning to creep in among the rest of the Persian empire?

Getting to know Esther...

3. Read Esther 1:1-22 and 2:1-23. Esther had two names. Her Hebrew name, Hadassah, meant "myrtle." Her Persian name, Esther, meant "star." Describe Esther.
4. How do you know that Esther's physical beauty was extremely important to the king?
5. According to 2:15, 20, what is revealed about Esther's character that would have helped her in the palace?
6. Mordecai was Esther's cousin and adoptive father. Notice how Esther presented Mordecai's uncovering of an assassination plot to the king. Why was her handling of this matter so crucial?

7. ***Your Life's Journey:*** Notice how Esther's beauty and her character helped her to find favor with Hegai and the king. Has there been a time in your life when you needed to obtain and maintain favor with someone? How did your character help you to do that with integrity?

Day Two Study

8. Read Esther 3:1-15 and 4:1-17.

- What crisis occurred that threatened the Jews, including Esther and Mordecai?
- How did Esther *first* respond to Mordecai's message (4:11)?

9. In 4:14, Mordecai gives Esther "God's perspective" on her life and current circumstances. What is it?

10. Read Genesis 50:15-21. Compare Joseph's perspective on his life and position with Mordecai's advice to Esther.

11. What does Esther's reply tell you about her as a woman of God?

12. Read Esther 5:1-14. Why do you think Esther put on her “royal robes?”

13. Twice Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet.

- What was Esther's strategy at this point?

- How successful was it?

14. Read Esther 6:1-14. What insight did Haman's wife, Zeresh, have about the Jews that Haman ignored?

15. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Can you look back at your life and see a “God moment” where you were given an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others around you? Describe how you recognized the opportunity and what happened.

Day Three Study

16. Read Esther 7:1-10. Compare 7:2 with 5:3, 6. The king makes the same statement three separate times to Esther. Esther finally takes advantage of his offer. What does she request?
17. What character traits did Esther exhibit in this incident?
18. Read Esther 8:1-10:3. How did God reward Esther for her courage?
19. According to law, a decree written in the king's name and signed with his signet ring may not be revoked. Explain how Esther was able to work around this challenge to save her people.
20. Read 8:16-17 again. Describe what happened and how that glorified God.

Think About It: The plot once intended to destroy the Jews resulted in a festival which helped to unite and sustain them as a people. And, God used this opportunity to bring nonbelievers to faith in Himself. A win-win for all!

21. Esther was the creative wife of a nonbeliever. She used her beauty and charm as well as brains to God's advantage. How did she get her husband to become part of her team?

22. **Your Life's Journey:** Perhaps you are married to an unbeliever or work with unbelievers in your job.

- If you are married to an unbeliever, how does the example of Esther encourage you as a wife? How do you use your influence to God's advantage in your marriage and work with your husband as a team for the common good?
- If you are in a work situation with an unbeliever (boss, manager or co-worker), how does the example of Esther encourage you as an employee? How do you use your influence to God's advantage in your job and work with your co-workers as a team for the common good?

Day Four Study – The Walk From Fear To Faith

God loved Esther. He knew what was going on in her life. He was able to do something about it. But, God did not prevent Esther from being taken into a king's harem. He did not make it easy for her to stand up for her people. During her walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. Likewise, God may not choose to rescue you from difficult circumstances in which you find yourself. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

23. List all the situations in Esther's life that could have "terrified" her.

24. Considering those opportunities for being terrified, in which ones did Esther, by faith, do what was right and not give way to fear?

25. **Your Life's Story:** We, too, may find ourselves in situations that seem beyond our ability to handle or control. Perhaps you have an enemy (or your husband or closest friend may have one). How can you use Esther's response to this threat to her people and relate it to your life today?

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Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Esther-The Two Aspects of Trusting God”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Esther—The Two Aspects of Trusting God

Trust God as you step forward to do your part His way; trust Him to do His part alongside what you are doing.

Has God placed something in your heart for you to do? Whatever it is involves two aspects of trusting God. 1) You must trust Him as you step forward and do your part His way. And, 2) you must trust Him to do His part in the areas over which you have no control. Those two aspects of trusting God are necessary to act on whatever God has placed in your heart to do. Esther's story provides a beautiful illustration of this for us.

The seed is planted in the heart

- Mordecai gave Esther some not-so-good news. All the Jews would be killed in 11 months. Her life would not likely be spared. Then, he challenged her with the message that she was in the God-chosen place to do something about the peril facing herself, her family, and her people. God placed this on her heart.
- Esther prayed about this for 3 days, calling other Jews to pray with her. She needed God's guidance about what to do next. Before she approached the king of Persia about this, Esther needed God to be with her as she did her part (which was to speak to the king). And, she needed God to do His part in directing the heart and mind of the king to receive her. Those are the two aspects of trusting God.
- Learning to live dependently on our God is not a matter of doing whatever you ethically and honorably can while trusting the rest to God. When God places something in your heart to do, especially when it involves someone else and situations over which you have no control, you must trust God to lead you in what you choose to do. You want to do your part His way, not your own way or the world's way

The time has come to act

- After that time of prayer, Esther knew the time had come to act. Trusting God, she did her part by approaching the king the right way, making sure he could see her, and waiting for his response. She didn't force herself into the king's presence, demanding his attention. She did her part the way God would want her to show respect for her husband, the king.
- God took care of His part by directing the king's heart and mind to be favorable to Esther's presence and her request. He invited her into the chamber and asked what she wanted from him. Esther's part was to invite the king and Haman to a banquet. God worked through the king to grant Esther's request and accept her invitation. Those are the two aspects of trusting God.

Opposition tested Esther's trust

- Completely trusting God and doing things God's way doesn't stop the opposition. Esther's invitation included Haman, the one who initiated the attack on the Jews. That didn't discourage Esther from doing what God had placed in her heart to do. She knew she would be in the presence of someone who hated her people and would have hated her if he knew she was Jewish. His pleading with her during the second banquet in such a familiar manner threatened her position with her husband, the king.
- God didn't make it easy for Esther to do what he called her to do. Yet, she did her part God's way while trusting that God would do His part in making the king's heart respond favorably to her request to save her people.
- Learning to live dependently on our God does not guarantee that He will stop the opposition against you. Yes, He places that desire in your heart. He wants you to be obedient in carrying it out. But, He doesn't necessarily make it easy. Why doesn't God stop the opposition?

"But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." (2 Corinthians 1:9)

- This happens (suffering, hardship, opposition, whatever it is) so we will learn to rely on God more than on ourselves. It's not that we sit back and do nothing while waiting for God to do everything. Although, sometimes we need to pray and wait for the right moment to act as Esther did. That is still trusting Him while we are doing our part (waiting and praying, asking for guidance), knowing that He is working on His part (whatever that situation requires). Those are the two aspects of trusting God.

What has God placed on your heart to do for others?

- Is it raising children to know and love God and choose to follow Him as adults? Trust Him to lead you to follow godly child-rearing principles and actions while trusting Him to work in the hearts of your children.
- Is it managing people or a project at work? Trust God to lead you to act with honesty and integrity among your fellow employees and managers while trusting Him to work in the hearts of those around you.
- Is it serving in a local ministry with teens or special needs or homeless people? Whatever it is, trust God to lead you to speak and act with compassion while trusting Him to work to meet the needs of those you are serving.

Whatever it is, trust God to show you how to do your part His way. And, trust Him to do His part alongside what you are doing.

Celebrate the victories! That's how you walk from fear to faith.

Keep reading to get a peek at Lesson One of the next study in this series, *Profiles of Perseverance*. Having perseverance in your life will help you to continue walking from fear to faith.

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Preview of “Profiles of Perseverance”

Profiles of Perseverance: Sustained by Hope in the Rough-and-Tumble of Real Life

Lesson 1: What Is Perseverance?

Hebrews 12:1-3; Romans 15:4

Listen to the podcast: The Need for Perseverance

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“The Need for Perseverance”](#) as an introduction to the whole study. Use the following listener guide.

Jesus said to His followers that we will have trouble in this world (John 16:33). All of us. It doesn't matter where you live or how much money you have or what kind of success you have gained. It doesn't even matter how much faith you have or how faithful you have been to God in your daily life and work. Some troubles simply come from living in this fallen world and are common to everyone. Illness and natural disasters. Other troubles like persecution and rejection are related to being a child of God living in an unbelieving world. Then there are those we inflict upon ourselves because of sin still present within us—our own bad choices—or troubles that others inflict upon us because of their bad choices. Either way, we get stuck with the results. So, in order to not only survive but also to thrive over a lifetime of ups and downs, you and I need to have something called **perseverance**, something the Bible says is good for us.

What is perseverance?

Perseverance is *holding to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose without giving way*. It refers to active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden.

The Greek word used often in the New Testament means “bearing under.” It's holding up a load with staying power and tenacity. You have to be “under” to bear “under.”

Suffering tests our faith; Perseverance matures our faith.

The testing of our faith is on faith that is actually there. You can rejoice that you have faith worth testing (James 1:3).

Jesus uses those tough times, when we are under stress, pain or suffering to reveal the parts of our character that are not so beautiful, not so strong, not so godly. And, if we let Him, He will remove that ugly stuff and strengthen what's left so we can **persevere**.

When we persevere through any pain, distress, or long-term challenge, we will be mature, complete and lacking nothing (James 1:4). And, even have joy in the process because of the reward at the end for that staying power.

The need for hope in this difficult world

Hebrews 6:19 describes hope as an “anchor for the soul.” It gives us security and stability like an anchor does for a ship in the midst of a storm.

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking but a *confident, eager expectation of a coming certainty* based on the character of God to back up His promises. Our hope is rooted in the faithfulness of God.

That hope enables us to persevere through the rough-and-tumble of real life.

We live in the time period between Genesis 3 when sin entered the world and Revelation 21 when God does away with all sin and its effects. If we are going to **faithfully persevere**, we are going to have to accept this—not like it, but recognize it and not be discouraged.

The choice to persevere

You have to choose perseverance for it to finish its work. The opposite choice would result in whining, complaining, anger at God, and giving up.

If we will let Him, Jesus will remove that yucky stuff to make us mature and complete, not lacking in anything **needed** necessary to live out Jesus' life in us.

For you and me, God has things for us to do, kingdom work to do here on earth, during this time between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21. And, He needs us to be mature.

Prepare by instruction, learn by experience

God's way of developing perseverance in our lives is this: "Prepare by instruction; learn by experience." Our instruction comes from the Bible, especially viewing the work of God in the lives of men and women during much of their lifetime. We can see God's faithfulness to them and be confident in His faithfulness to us as well. He is the same God.

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NASB)

When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful and pessimistic. We think to ourselves, "Nothing's going to work. I don't know if I can get through this." But, when we look at the Bible and see how God empowered everyday people like you and I to face their challenges, the Holy Spirit uses that scripture to strengthen us and to give us courage that we didn't know we had.

God is the best teacher. So, we are going to look at the lives of several Old Testament believers to gain a long-term perspective about God's faithfulness to them as they persevered over many years, not just during a scene from their lives. We will discover what it means to be sustained by hope in the faithfulness of God, enabling us to persevere in the rough-and-tumble of life.

Do you want perseverance in your life? Consider these to be the lane markers for the race.

- #1. Choose to persevere through every challenge.
- #2. Count on God's promise to give you hope.
- #3. Let that hope sustain you through the rough-and-tumble of life.
- #4. Celebrate the joyful reward.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with hope so you can persevere through life.

Day One Study

The ABCs of Our Study—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the stories (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

Authors

Unlike most of the New Testament books, we often do not know the authors of the Old Testament books, especially the ones of history. We will look at what we do know in the Historical Insights found at the beginning of lessons.

Background and Context

The books of the Old Testament (except for Genesis and Job) are the accounts of people living under the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses. It is important to keep that background and context in mind when studying them.

For example:

- “Salvation” (especially in the Psalms) usually refers to a temporal *deliverance* from trouble or danger, not regarding eternal life.
- A “judge” was like a hero or knight in shining armor, one who defended justice and the cause of the poor and defenseless, and often a military leader.
- “The Holy Spirit” came upon certain individuals *temporarily* to empower them for special service (such as artisans, prophets or kings) then left when that service was completed.
- “Forgiveness of sins” under the Law was accomplished through *atonement*, which means a “covering” for sin. A gracious God offered forgiveness to those who trusted in His lovingkindness, but it was at best *temporary* and *up-to-date*. Nowhere in the Law of Moses is there offered forgiveness for tomorrow’s sins.

Throughout the Old Testament, God’s grace accepted any person who came to Him by faith in Him. They received eternal salvation by their faith alone. That is consistent with what the New Testament teaches.

God’s method of *managing* His people, however, was different, so *how* one’s faith was expressed and lived out differed as well. The Tabernacle and the Temple represented the presence of God dwelling among His chosen people, Israel. There the priests represented the people to God, and sacrificial offerings were the prime way to publicly express worship, repentance, and thanksgiving. God wanted the worshiper’s *heart* first. Where one’s *heart* was right, sacrifices could be acceptable to God as an expression of inner faith. While we no longer express worship to God through animal sacrifices, He still desires the hearts of His people above all else.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He brought to a close the age of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, and simultaneously inaugurated the New Covenant in which we live. So, as you read the Old Testament books, read first to obtain accurate understanding of what their authors meant. Then, use New Testament teachings to apply truth about God to your everyday life in Jesus Christ.

1. What grabbed your attention as you read the background and context of any Old Testament study?

Sustained by Hope in the Rough-And-Tumble of Life

What is perseverance? By definition, “perseverance” is *holding to a course of action, belief, or purpose without giving way*. Perseverance, often used interchangeably with the word *endurance*, is the quality that enables a person to stand on his or her feet when facing a storm head on. It refers to active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden, not just getting stuck in traffic. It carries the connotation of whole life experience.

By viewing the profiles (biographies) of Joseph, David, Elijah, and Nehemiah during much of their lifetime, we see God's faithfulness to them over many years, not just during a scene from their lives. By looking at their stories, we gain a long-term perspective through the rough-and-tumble of life. We can be encouraged to endure faithfully throughout our own rough-and-tumble life in this troubling yet exciting world. The Christian life is not a subject to be learned. Rather, it is a life to be lived.

Jesus said that we will surely have trouble in this world (John 16:33)—yes, even those of us who are faithful to Him. Whatever the struggles we face, we need a secure hope in order to "hang in there" over a lifetime of growing in His grace. The Christian life is not only **empowered by faith**; it is also **sustained by hope**. Only a secure hope rooted in the faithfulness of God enables us to weather the storms of life and persevere over a lifetime.

The writer of Hebrews pointed to the one focus in life that can give us hope that lasts, "keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). We must focus on what He is doing in the midst of what we are doing. It is our total confidence that Christ will complete the work He began in us that enables us to persevere through the rough-and-tumble of life.

By trusting a faithful God through present difficulties and pains, we can remain steadfast because we know the outcome. Christ will complete the work He began in us that enables us to persevere over a lifetime. We can persevere through the rough-and-tumble of life as we are empowered by our faith and sustained by our hope in an always faithful God.

Together, let's discover what it means to be sustained by hope in this rough-and-tumble life. Are you ready to develop perseverance in your life?!

Think About It: You can't grow in grace in a classroom, through a seminar, or during a "quiet time," as good as those things may be...You can only grow in grace through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches you truth from His Word, which you then take out into the rough-and-tumble of real life in the real world. The "curriculum" cannot be planned or anticipated...Whatever the situations in *your* life may be, **that** is where you will have to grow in grace...in spite of our personal failures and sins... as we focus on what God is doing in the midst of what we are doing. (Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, pp. 13-15)

2. In the space below, write the definition of *perseverance* from the first paragraph of the explanation you just read. Remember this definition as you do this study.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

3. Write Hebrews 12:1-3 in the space below. These are our key verses for the whole study. We suggest that you work on memorizing these verses as you do your lessons.

- What grabs your attention from these verses?
4. ***Your life's journey:*** What are you hoping to learn from this study? Where in your life do you need to develop perseverance?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Day Two Study

Read Hebrews 11:1-12:3. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Notice that the imagery used in 12:1 suggests an athletic contest in a great amphitheater with a dense cloud of witnesses. These are not spectators but those who can offer testimony of the value of putting faith in God even when you can't see the end. They lived that way. Just who are these witnesses?

5. Choose 5 of the "witnesses" in this chapter to list below by name or description. Pay particular notice to any challenging life circumstances given about them.
6. The job of a witness is to testify. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, their lives testified that perseverance is possible. The question then is "How?" To help you derive an answer, first reread Heb. 11:1, 6 then look for one phrase that is consistently used throughout the Hebrews 11 chapter.

- How many times? _____

-
7. What does this tell you about how the witnesses persevered through all those challenging (or ordinary) life circumstances?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated "endurance" or "perseverance" literally means "an abiding under; to abide." In other New Testament verses, it is translated "patience." Patience may be passive, that is, **endurance** under the general trials of life, Christian service or discipline. Patience may also be active (**perseverance**) involving persistence in well-doing, fruit-bearing and running the appointed race despite trials and distractions of life. (*Vines Complete Expository Dictionary*, pages 462-463)

Although the words *endurance* and *perseverance* may be used interchangeably, *perseverance* carries the connotation of whole life experience and is active. It is staying power. It is moving forward with the wind in your face trying to push you back or knock you over. It gives us a long-term perspective.

8. Back to Hebrews 12:1-3, who is to be our focus as we run this race with perseverance?

9. Read the following verses to answer this question, "What does it mean to fix your eyes on Jesus, and why should you?"

- John 15:5—

- John 14:6—

- John 8:31-32—

10. Read the following quote. In the space below, explain why this analogy is a good one regarding a life of faith.

Think About It: We are called first and foremost to a **Person**... There is a striking parallel between the baby's dependent relationship with its mother and our life of dependency on Christ. Because of its dependent life, a baby in the womb could say, "For me, to live is Mom." In the same way, we can say, "For me, to live is Christ." (Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, p. 78)

11. **Your life's journey:** Hebrews 12:1-2 refers to distractions that interfere with our running our "race of life" successfully. Think about things in your own life that are encumbrances or entanglements to you. What are they? No doubt they will be very similar to those distracting the people we will be studying through these lessons. Describe them through words or drawings in the space below.

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Small Group Discussion Guide

LESSON 1: GOT FEAR? TRUST GOD

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What phrases in Psalm 56:3-4 tell you what to do when you are afraid?
- From 1 Peter 3:3-6, God considers a gentle and quiet spirit in a woman of great worth in His sight (verse 4)? What does it mean to have a “gentle” and “quiet” spirit?
- Why do you think these qualities in a woman would be so precious – of great worth – to God?
- From 1 Peter 3:5-6, what are the three choices that women can make?
- What does it mean to not give way to fear?
- Have you ever felt terrified? How did you respond?
- What’s harder for God: rescuing us from desperate circumstances or developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit? Why?
- What might be holding you back from trusting Him whenever you are afraid?

Day Two Study

- From Hebrews 11:1 and 6: What is faith, and what must you believe about God in your faith?
- After reading the “Connecting with Old Testament Everyday Women” box, what of their life experiences and fears might have been the same as your own life experiences and fears?
- Read John 14:27 and 16:33. What does Jesus promise to you?
- Has there been a problem in your life where you needed to make a choice to do right, but the possible consequences filled you with fear? Have you learned to trust God and live by faith in that area, or are you still struggling with it?

Day Three Study—Four Truths Essential to Faith

- God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But, in any and all situations, you can count on the four truths essential to faith. Say them aloud together, making them personal.
- After reading the words to the song, discuss what is causing them fear today. What are their choices for acting on that fear? Apply the 4 truths to each situation.

Day Four Study — The Walk From Fear To Faith

- Let the share about the fears they have confronted this week.
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 2: SARAH — A WOMAN LIKE US

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- Describe Sarah and her circumstances, including going along with Abraham's crazy "Tell 'em you're my sister" plan. What did you learn about Sarah's life at this time? (Did anyone research Ur to find out what Sarah left?) Would you have done something similar to save the life of someone you love?
- God honored Sarah for not giving way to fear (1 Peter 3:5-6). Abraham failed to protect Sarah in this incident, but God didn't. Abraham had not given over the safety of his own life to the Lord yet because his faith did not extend to this area. Like Abraham, what area of your life have you never really given over to the Lord, and how does this affect those around you?

Day Two

- What was God's plan to solve their barrenness problem? What was Abraham's plan? What was Sarah's plan? How did Sarah's plan play out and affect all those involved?
- About 13 years later, God once again told Abraham His plan to provide descendants for Abraham and a faithful people for Himself. How did Abraham respond this time? What additional information is given in Romans 4:18-21?
- Why did the three visitors come? What did the Lord give Sarah for the first time, and how did she respond?
- In what areas of your life have you learned greater trust of your God? Describe one area more fully.

Day Three

- What story did Sarah have to tell about Isaac's birth? How do we know that God loved Sarah as much as Abraham?
- About three years later, the conflict with Hagar and Ishmael reached a head. What was the response of Sarah, Abraham and God to the situation?
- From your study, what descriptive characteristics of Sarah, positive or negative, did you write down to help you remember her? What about Sarah can you identify with?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- What in Sarah's life could have "terrified" her? In which ones did Sarah, by faith, do what was right and not give way to fear?
- In what areas of your life have you learned greater trust of your God?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 3: JOCHEBED & MIRIAM —INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What did you learn about the women who influenced Miriam, especially her mother, Jochebed?
- How did you describe Miriam as a child and the fearful situations she faced?
- Moses, Aaron, and Miriam came from a faith-filled home. What kind of home did you grow up in, and how has this affected your ability to courageously trust God and not give way to fear?

Day Two

- From Exodus 14, what did Miriam experience of God's faithfulness along with the rest of Israel?
- God said in Micah 6:4 that He sent Miriam to be a leader of Israel. In what ways did she serve God through leading?
- What did you learn about the various aspects of prophesying?
- The Holy Spirit still inspires us to break out in enthusiastic praise to God just like He did through Miriam. Share about a time when you began to spontaneously praise God through the ways mentioned or another way.
- Even if you've never testified like Miriam did, your story of God's faithfulness in your life is your testimony. Would any of you like to share what you've written about God's faithfulness to you?

Day Three

- Why were Miriam and Aaron talking against Moses?
- Discuss the Lord's response to their complaining and how His response affected Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
- What is our responsibility towards authority, and how are we to prevent undermining someone's leadership over us?
- What attitudes should we have towards the rest of our church family if we are in leadership positions in the Body of Christ?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Thinking back through Miriam's life, what situations did she face that could have terrified her? How did she respond to God by faith in those situations?
- Go through the "Applying Faith to Fear" process and then have everyone discuss their plan of action to apply faith to one of their fears right now.

LESSON 4: RAHAB — A PAST & A FUTURE

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- Why did God bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land accompanied by so many miraculous events?
- What did the people of Rahab's land know about Israel and her history, and how did that knowledge affect them? (If anyone researched what life was like in Jericho, ask her to share that information.)
- Describe Rahab and discuss whether anyone else in Jericho could have come to the same conclusion about the God of Israel that she did. What did you learn about her and the people of Jericho?
- Rahab made a conscious choice for God based upon the facts she knew about Him. What did she do that day, and what risk did that involve?

Day Two

- Regarding the covenant the spies made with Rahab, what were the responsibilities for each party?
- What was God's plan for defeating Jericho, and how did the people respond?
- Rahab and her family had to wait those seven days also. What might have been her emotions during this time? What did God do for her and her family?
- Not knowing the "marching orders," Rahab had to wait for God to act. We also must wait for God's timing, which is always perfect, in answer to our prayers. Has anyone become discouraged from having to wait? How does knowing that God is in the waiting, too, and that waiting binds you together with Him change your perspective of waiting?

Day Three

- What did you learn from the 3 mentions of Rahab in the New Testament?
- Consider the word "disobedient" in the context of the rest of Jericho. Did God give them an opportunity to be persuaded, and how did He do it?
- Consider God's grace toward the prostitute Rahab. In what ways did He forgive her past and give her a new future?
- Do you feel some sins in your past or present are so terrible that they can't be forgiven or that you are unworthy to serve God? What have you learned from Rahab's story that confirms to you God can forgive your past and give you a new future?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Consider how Rahab faced the opportunities for fear in her life by faith in God.
- Let them share about the problems they are facing now, the choices available to them, and how they will respond?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 5: DEBORAH & Jael — RESOURCEFUL WOMEN

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What were God's general instructions to Israel regarding life in the land?
- Why did the Israelites forget God so readily, what did God say would happen, and how is God's faithfulness demonstrated to His people as He dealt with them? (If anyone found out more about the Canaanite oppression, ask her to share the information with the group.)

Day Two

- Describe Deborah using as many descriptive terms as possible.
- How did Deborah act as a prophetess?
- Compare Deborah and Barak regarding the response of each to God's word, including His plan to have the Israelites encamp on a mountain before the battle.
- How are you serving God using your gifts as Deborah served Him using hers? What, if anything, is holding you back?

Day Three

- Describe Jael and discuss whether Jael was doing God's will. What did you determine about her?
- How did Jael do what was right without giving way to fear, and what risks did she take doing this?
- What is revealed in Deborah's song about the various subjects listed? (Go through each one.)
- Discuss God's use of women in civil leadership.
- How do Deborah and Jael encourage you as a woman, especially how God used them as they functioned in their various roles as women with the resources available to them every day? Consider how your everyday womanly skills and resources have benefited others. Would anyone like to share about a specific time?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Discuss the opportunities for fear in the lives of Deborah and Jael and how each responded to those opportunities.
- When was the last time you showed courage in living for Christ—such as testifying publicly about your faith, challenging others to do right, forgetting the opinion of the crowd, expressing love and appreciation for those in authority, etc.? What might be holding you back? Does anyone want to share about this?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 6: NAOMI & RUTH — MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What did you learn about Naomi and Ruth, especially what Ruth had learned from Naomi through the years?
- What relationship(s) did Ruth give up to pursue her new faith? Has your faith caused a separation between you and your natural family or someone formerly very close to you?
- Would anyone like to share their experience with grief, how you felt, how long it lasted, what got you through it?
- Describe their relationship and how they helped each other.

Day Two

- Once in Bethlehem, what kinds of emotions might each have been experiencing, and how do these women encourage one another?
- Knowing the provisions God made for widows in the Jewish culture, how would this foster compassion in the community?
- What did you learn about the “Kinsman Redeemer” law that provided for childless widows especially?
- What did the non-Jewish Ruth learn about God’s faithfulness to her through this special law?

Day Three

- What did God do for both Ruth and Naomi? How are we blessed through this new marriage?
- What did you learn about “loyalty”—what it means and to whom it applies?
- Discuss the advantages of a mentoring relationship between older and younger women—each benefiting the other.
- Consider seeking someone whom you could trust for advice and encouragement or someone who might need your encouragement.
- If you are married or one of your children is married, how can you apply this lesson to your “in-law” relationship?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- What circumstances could have terrified Naomi and Ruth? How did each respond to God by faith?
- Considering the verses and the song lyrics, what decision should we make when things are tough? Let them give examples from their lives.
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 7: HANNAH & MRS. MANOAH — MOTHERING CHALLENGES

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What did you learn about Mrs. Manoah and God's plan to provide for her need and to help Israel as well?
- Discuss Mrs. Manoah's responsibility while pregnant and in raising her Nazirite son. How does this scripture support the value of the life of an unborn child before birth?
- Discuss how God communicated to both Mrs. Manoah and her husband. What do their responses reveal about their faith? (If anyone did a study on the "angel of the Lord," ask her to share that information.)
- What did you learn about Samson and how you can deal with fears about raising a prodigal son?

Day Two

- What did you learn about Hannah and her life situation?
- Discuss the indication that Elkanah did not fully recognize Hannah's emotional needs or perhaps misunderstood her. Does your husband or closest friend ever misunderstand your feelings, and how do you react?
- Discuss how Hannah grew spiritually because of her barrenness. Like Hannah's prayer, God uses prayer to get us into partnership with Him, then we recognize His blessing. Who is helping us in our prayer and how?
- Is there anyone here who has experienced barrenness for some time like Hannah and Sarah did? How have you learned to live through it? (If anyone researched the women identified in scripture without reference to children, ask them to share what they learned.)

Day Three

- Hannah fulfilled her vow to God and gave praise to Him through a song. What emotions does she express, and what truths does she affirm about her God in this song?
- Hannah left her boy in the hands of old Eli who had not done very well raising his own sons. Why didn't that terrify her? What did you learn of God's faithfulness to Samuel as he grew up as well as Samuel's response?
- How did Hannah mother her son from a distance? If anyone here has to be a mother from a distance, please share with us your experience with that and whether or not you have learned to trust God with that child.

Day Four — *The Walk from Fear to Faith*

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Reflect on the two women studied, what fears they may have faced, and how they responded to God by faith. What did you determine about them?
- Would anyone like to share what you wrote about the great love of the Lord for you and how He took care of you in 1 or 2 specific situations?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 8: ABIGAIL & BATHSHEBA — TWO WIVES

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- What did you learn about God's choice of David and anointing him as king?
- Describe Abigail, Nabal, and their possible home life.

Day Two

- Abigail didn't panic. Would you have panicked? Does anyone want to share about being in such a dangerous (or perceived dangerous) situation and how you got through it?
- How did Abigail do what was right on behalf of both her husband and David without giving way to fear?
- How did the Lord deal with Nabal?
- Discuss spiritual maturity in Abigail in spite of her difficult situation. How does God use difficulties to shape us?
- Abigail's attitudes and feelings were no doubt affected by her probably living in the midst of constant stress of unresolved conflict. How should we counsel a woman in such a situation? (Offer confidentiality and emotional support to someone currently living in such a home.)

Day Three

- What do you learn about Bathsheba and her response to challenging situations? (If anyone researched about Jerusalem, what did they learn that would enhance this discussion?)
- Contrast Bathsheba's husband with Abigail's husband and consider what David's actions cost Bathsheba.
- Considering the verse referenced and remembering how Abigail prevented an angry David from doing evil, could Bathsheba have likewise appealed to David?
- How did God view what happened to Bathsheba, and what would be the consequences?
- Ask if anyone would like to share something on the subject of immorality in previous relationships and learning to forgive oneself and the other person.

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Discuss the situations that could have terrified Abigail or Bathsheba and any response to God by faith.
- What does the Bible say of the role that physical beauty should have in a person's character?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 9: TWO WIDOWS — SINGLE WITH CHILDREN

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- Since God did answer Elijah's prayer, what effects did that drought have on people, and what did Elijah learn about God's creative provision for him? (Thought question: When we ask for God to work in someone else's life, are we willing to suffer the consequences of His action ourselves?)
- Consider God's provision for His children today. What did you learn from those verses, and how you have seen God creatively provide for you?

Day Two

- What did you learn about this poor widow and her situation in life?
- What did God do for her, and how did she respond? What was her responsibility, and how was her obedience rewarded?
- Reflecting on the song lyrics and the scriptures given, how grateful are you for what the Lord has already done in your life and for the times He says, "No"?
- What tragedy occurred in this household, and why did the widow respond as she did? (Cover the "Focus on the Meaning.") Have you ever experienced anger or distrust of God when something bad happened? If so, how did you get over it?
- As God's representative, what did Elijah do? Why does God perform miracles? Did it work this time?
- When we seek first His kingdom and righteousness, He promises to be faithful to us to provide our needs. You might know someone who turned to the Lord only after exhausting all other resources. When might it be good to pray for someone to reach desperate circumstances? What if it involves you?

Day Three

- What measures had God included in His Law to care for the helpless?
- What was the widow's responsibility, and what benefits did she gain from her obedience?
- How could this incident have impacted her sons?
- God defended her cause through both a miracle and through the community helping her. From the verses given, what did you learn about helping needy women in our community, especially in the Body of Christ?

Day Four — *The Walk from Fear to Faith*

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- What fears did both of these women face, and how did they demonstrate faith?
- What do you learn from seeing that God used what both women already had as a resource to help them? Does anyone want to share how God has done this in your life?
- Discuss the podcast.

LESSON 10: WOMAN OF SHUNEM — A STORY TO TELL

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- Describe this woman, her home life, and her idea to serve God's representative.
- Elisha cares enough about her to realize she does need a child. What does this woman learn about God through this?
- Discuss homemaking as a ministry and your home as a ministry tool. Has God given you opportunity to use your home to minister to someone else?
- How can you better serve those who are dedicating their lives to serve you, particularly pastors and Bible teachers?

Day Two

- What crisis occurred, and how did she respond to the crisis?
- This woman was seeking God, through His representative Elisha. What confidence do we have in God when we bring our deepest needs to Him? Does anyone want to share about a time when you faced a crisis that only God could handle?
- What did you learn about Elisha's respect for this woman and his ability to perform this miracle?
- Consider steps to take to remain faithful to God alone in the midst of a wicked culture. What would those be?

Day Three

- In what ways has God shown His faithfulness to her through good times and bad in her past, in her present, and for her future?
- After reading this passage, why do you think God allowed the family in Shunem to experience the crisis in 2 Kings 4?
- How does this woman inspire you, and how do other women today inspire you?

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Reflect on the fears this woman faced at different times in her life and how she responded to God by faith. What did you learn?
- Discuss the podcast.
- Group members share their stories with the group during this week or next. Consider the following guidelines:
 - Give each woman about 5 minutes.
 - Ask everyone not to interrupt her as she shares her story.
 - Stress confidentiality from group members about what is shared.
 - Remember that you are not to try to fix any "problem" she expresses, but to point her to Jesus.

LESSON 11: ESTHER — WOMAN OF COURAGE

Read the Bible verse at the beginning of the lesson. Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion.

Day One

- Discuss the Israelites had experienced for the years before Esther's time.
- Describe Esther.
- Discuss Esther's character and how it helped her in the palace and in handling the matter of Mordecai.
- Share a time in your life when you needed to obtain and maintain favor with someone and did that with integrity.

Day Two

- What crisis occurred, and what was Mordecai's response?
- Compare Mordecai's words with Joseph's perspective on his life and position.
- How did Esther respond to Mordecai's advice?
- Describe a "God moment" in your life where were given the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others around you.

Day Three

- Compare 7:2 and 5:3, 6. Discuss the king's statement and Esther's request.
- What character traits did Esther exhibit in this incident?
- How was Esther able to work around challenges to save her people?
- How was God glorified in the results of Esther's request?
- Discuss being married or working with unbelievers as a team for the common good.

Day Four — The Walk from Fear to Faith

- Read the paragraph and the four truths.
- Reflect on the fears this woman faced at different times in her life and how she responded to God by faith. What did you learn?
- Discuss the podcast.
- Group members share their stories with the group this week if they didn't do it last week. Consider the following guidelines:
 - Give each woman about 5 minutes.
 - Ask everyone not to interrupt her as she shares her story.
 - Stress confidentiality from group members about what is shared.
 - Remember that you are not to try to fix any "problem" she expresses, but to point her to Jesus.

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Applying Faith To Fear

The information below is a great tool to use whenever you are afraid. It will lead you to apply faith to any fear.

1. **Confront** it. What fears do you have right now? Think about them. The worst ones, the real ones, and the imaginary ones.
2. **Ask** about each one: What is my worst-case scenario? Consider just one of those fears. What is the worst that could happen? Think realistically.
3. **Consider**: If the worst I can imagine happens, could I handle it through the presence and power of Jesus Christ?
 - As a believer, you have the power of the One who created the Universe living inside of you. Can He help me get through anything?
 - Remember Romans 8:26—the Spirit Himself is praying for you in your weakness when you don't even know what to ask for.
4. **Remember** these four truths:
 - God loves me. John 16:27; Romans 5:5, Ephesians 5:1
 - God knows what is going on in my life. *Matthew 6:31-32; Psalm 139:1-10*
 - God can do something about it. Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37; Mark 10:27
 - I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do. *Psalm 119:68; Proverbs 3:5*
5. **Pray**: Prayer is simply talking to God about anything and everything.
 - Thank the Lord for His presence and His goodness.
 - Ask Him for the courage and peace to ride out the storm. Where the Bible is clear, you can claim God's promises by faith.
 - Anytime, you can ask for deliverance and protection—but you cannot hold God to promises He hasn't made. He hasn't promised immunity from natural calamities, illness, and troubles.
6. **Live life** securely in Him:
 - Take common sense precautions. Be wise in the world.
 - Trust God to show you what to do and give you strength when you are weak.

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Sources

The following resources were used in the preparation and writing of this study.

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