

Issue #38 Spring 2017

Lesser Known

Women

Of The
Bible



Most of us are familiar with several well known women of the bible; like Eve, Sarah or Mary the mother of Jesus. However many other women play less prominent roles in the biblical account and unfortunately are sometimes less known. For instance, how much do you remember about Hagar, Tamar, or Michael? In fact, most people mentioned in the bible are less prominent folks. For instance, the Shulammite bride in Song of Solomon was a swarthy, hard working, country girl who caught the eye of the wise king in all his pomp, but she wasn't heard from again. Proverbs 31 addresses the worthy woman (or wife) and extols her virtues in idealized terms: *"her worth is far above jewels, she rises early to give food to her family, she extends her hand to the poor, such a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised;"* but no specific woman is identified. Then there is the unique choice of the church, as the bride of Christ, to portray the sublime example of the husband/wife relationship (Eph 5). The unmistakable message is that women, prominent or not, play important, albeit varied roles in the biblical account and their inclusion is there for our learning; we'd do well to consider their lives.

This publication issue focuses on several lesser known women who played significant, if less prominent roles, both in and out of the home; women we might well overlook in our study of God's word. But these lesser known women offer vital lessons as they lived out their lives while fulfilling their God given roles and responsibilities. Many of the women featured in this

(Continued on page 2)

Index of Articles

Introduction Phil Lumpkin	1	Rahab Jayme Parks	11	Anna Pat Lumpkin	18
Lot's Wife Lauri Mullins	3	Deborah & Jael Alyssa Johnson	12	Women at the Cross Debra Sweet	19
Rebekah Ivanna Baxley	4	Abigail Ron Gray	13	Sapphira Kelli Hinton	21
Leah Sandy Clark	6	Jezebel Sharon Campbell	15	Priscilla Amber Parks	22
Miriam Delilah Zeigler	8	The Shunammite Woman Alyssa Parks	16	Dinah Steven Baxley	24
Daughters of Zelophehad Carol Fertig	9	Gomer Charlotte Jobe	17		

issue lived faithful, godly lives and serve as positive examples for us to follow, such as Anna. Conversely, others provide negative examples, such as the infamous Jezebel. Who would want the following epitaph? *“Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him.”* 1 Kgs 21:25

In addition to featuring lesser known women of the bible, this issue is special in yet another way. Most of the articles are written by godly women at North Beach. Each of the women who’ve participated have done so in a humble and submissive manner. What they’ve written is insightful and informative and we commend their exegeses and application for your consideration.

We should all serve as sources of encouragement and exhortation, as well as

being open to learning from those who would provide those blessings for us. When Paul first went to Philippi, he sought out spiritually minded Jews; turns out they were all women (Acts 16:13). Its here we’re introduced to Lydia, the seller of purple from Thyatira. She and her household were the first converts in Philippi. Said another way, these women were the first church at Philippi. After Paul’s departure, I wonder who led the singing or who served the Lord’s Supper in their assembly?

North Beach church of Christ

7025 N. Beach St.

Ft Worth, TX 76137

www.nbcoc.org

Lot's Wife

Lauri Mullins

"Remember Lot's Wife." Luke 17:32 That's seems like an unusual admonishment for Jesus to make. There have been many Biblical women worth remembering: Sarah, Rahab, the Virgin Mary, and even the vast unnamed martyrs in the Hall of Faith mentioned in Hebrews. But we were never told to "specifically" remember them. In fact, the word "remember" is used in reference to only two women in the Bible. The first was Lot's wife, and the second was Mary, when she unselfishly anointed Jesus' head with costly oil before His death. (Mt 26:13) So why Lot's wife?

Now I'm sure everyone reading this article already knows the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. How Abraham and Lot had to separate their flocks after arriving in Canaan, due to quarrelling herdsmen, and Lot chose to live in the valley of the Jordan. And how approximately, 24 years later, the Lord visited Abraham to tell him he was going to be a father, and then shared His decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their immorality, and how Abraham pleaded with the LORD to not destroy the city for the sake of 10 righteous people, but even THAT was too great a number! And so out of compassion, the angels rescued Lot and his family from the planned destruction. I won't rehash the obvious, but since everything written in olden times is for our learning, perhaps we can find some lessons for ourselves as we "remember Lot's wife."

Mrs. Lot may have grown up in or around the city of Sodom. She would have

been raised with its customs and values; even perhaps its open acceptance of homosexuality. And, like many people today, who are just living their lives, she perhaps didn't feel it affected her, or her family, very much. Or so she thought. But that is speculation at this point. What we do know was that she had a life...just like us. She had two daughters that needed their wedding plans finalized. Dreams of future grandchildren might have begun turning around in her mind. She would have supervised, or actually did, the daily chores for running a household. When the evening meal needed to be prepared, perhaps she found herself asking, "What special dish can I make for Lot tonight?" Friends would be stopping by to share the daily gossip over the stone wall, and maybe on the next day she would visit her sister. In fact, none of the things Jesus spoke about in regards to Lot's day were inherently sinful. "They were eating,...drinking...buying,... selling,... planting,... building"... (Lu 17: 28-29) It's just that judgment came at an inopportune time. It came in the middle of ordinary everyday activities. Life was the way it had always been, except that last night when the two strangers her husband had invited, came and stayed under their roof. And suddenly her home was under attack! Men clamoring at the door wanting to do unspeakable, evil deeds to their guests! And then, unbelievably, she could actually hear her own godly husband, Lot, offering up their two beautiful daughters as substitutes to this lustful mob! And even her husband's own life was put at risk, surviving only by the help of these two strangers. (Can you imagine the fear that Mrs. Lot must have experi-

(Continued on page 4)

enced witnessing all of this?) And then, just as suddenly as it started, the beating on the door stopped and the mob dispersed, and the crisis was over. What a relief! Life could now go back to the way it had always been. But no...wait,...the two men were saying something unthinkable! The LORD was going to destroy her hometown of Sodom and everything in it. They had to get out, now! Her familiar world was to be gone...just like that! Quickly they had to pack, and needed to convince their sons-in-law to go with them, which they refused to take seriously. (Can you imagine how the daughters felt leaving their betrotheds behind?) By dawn of the next day, the angels forcibly seized the family and put them outside the gates of the city with the following words: *“Escape for your life!” Do not look behind you and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away.”* Gen 19:17

With the LORD’s graciousness being evident again, Lot’s family was allowed to head for Zoar, a town originally slated for destruction, but now, preserved. But once they reached the city, the terrifying judgment began. Brimstone and fire raining down from heaven,... the smell of sulfur and smoke,...the sounds of oblivion and screams of dying people and animals. But just like Eve, the temptation for Mrs. Lot reached a crescendo. The pressure from her inner feelings of curiosity, longings, attachments, internal fears and dreads became more important than heeding the angelic instruction. And so to her destruction, she looked back. How was she to know there would be eternal consequences? It was such a small thing, just a look over her shoulder, but it was enough. Her heart was

revealed and she was destroyed on the threshold of deliverance. Unfortunately, that could have been any one of us. Who hasn’t strained their neck to see an accident; or listened to their own personal doubts, demons, and desires rather than trust Jesus and His Word for strength? Our frail human nature trips us up every time.

So as we look backward into history, again the question is, are we so different? If we were, Jesus would never have told us to remember her. And as one writer said, “We see one grand absolute truth standing out clearly. There will be no divided heart in heaven. There will be no half surrender on the part of the redeemed. Those who enter God’s kingdom will be there because they wanted eternal life more than anything else in the whole world.” So the next time you “remember Lot’s wife,” recall the old adage: “there but for the grace of God go I.”

Rebekah

Ivanna Baxley

When Rebekah was just a girl God chose her to play a vital role in the story of His people. She would become an important person among God’s people. She would have both faith and doubt, believing that God’s promise required her intervention. We all know that God is in charge of our lives. Why do we sometimes feel like we have to run the show?

Let’s start at the beginning. God takes care of His people. This is what Abraham said to his servant when he was sent to find a wife for Isaac: *“...The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you*

(Continued on page 5)

and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house." Gen 24:40 The servant asked God for assistance: *"Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' – let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac."* Gen 24:14 That's exactly what happened. *"And they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will go.'" Gen 24:58*

God took care of Isaac and Rebekah. *"Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife and he loved her."* Gen 24:67 Rebekah should have seen how God was working in her life. *"And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived."* Gen 25:21 *"And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac...she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'" Rom 9:10-12* This might have been a reason why she loved Jacob more than Esau. She should have understood God would keep His promises, though. We know Rebekah loved the Lord. She knew He wanted Jacob to have the special blessing from his father. She decided she would arrange with Jacob for it to happen. Unfortunately, she tricked Isaac to help achieve this promise.

Every mom says to her children "Do what I tell you." She overheard Isaac tell Esau to hunt game and prepare him good food. She said to Jacob: *"Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you."* Gen

27:8 She told Jacob to take from the flock and she would prepare delicious food for Isaac. Isaac's eyes were not good anymore, and he did not recognize him, and so he blessed Jacob instead of Esau. When Esau came to him, Isaac *"trembled very violently."* Gen 27:33 Isaac told Esau that his brother had taken away his blessing. *"Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him... 'The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'" Gen 27:41*

So, by trickery Jacob received the blessing. God's promise that the older will serve the younger came to be. Unfortunately, Jacob was driven away from Rebekah who loved him so much. Rebekah found out the hard way how wrong it was to love one child more than the other. There should be no partiality in general, but even more so in our families. *"For God shows no partiality."* Rom 2:11 *"So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'" Acts 10:34*

She also discovered she should not have tricked Isaac. We should not lie, or trick other people. *"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers."* Prov 6:16-19

Rebekah also learned that God did not need her help. God was at work here. We have many different stories in the Bible that

show us how God is in control. The angel told Mary: *“And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son... For nothing will be impossible with God.”* Lu 1:36-37 Jesus also said to his disciples: *“What is impossible with man is possible with God.”* Lu 18:27

God used a woman who acted in a far less than perfect way to accomplish His purposes. Aren't we glad He does that? We all make mistakes. Aren't we glad He chooses sinners like Rebekah to open our understanding, and lead us to Him? We have a God who owes us nothing, but who has given us everything we have. He knows how much we are like Rebekah, yet He made it possible for us to be saved. *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:8-9

Leah

Sandy Clark

Jacob worked seven years for his uncle, Laban, so that he could marry his younger daughter, Rachel. But Laban substituted his older daughter, Leah, for Rachel at the wedding. The next morning, when Jacob discovered the deception, he agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. She was given to him as his wife one week later. Leah was unloved by her husband. She knew it before Jacob was tricked into marrying her and the situation didn't change even though she bore him six sons and a daughter. To make matters worse, she had weak eyes and her

younger sister, was beautiful. Rachel was the sister Jacob really loved, but she was barren. The jealousy between these sisters was the basis for fierce competition for the affection and attention of their husband.

Leah had the early lead in the competition. After her first son was born, she said *“Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.”* After her second son was born, she said *“Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved. He has therefore given me this son also.”* After the third son was born she said, *“Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.”* After her fourth son was born, she said *“This time I will praise the LORD.”* It almost sounds as though she was ready to be thankful for her children as more than bargaining chips, but the competition was about to heat up.

Rachel's maid had two sons with Jacob and she said *“With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.”* Well, Leah couldn't let Rachel have the last word, so she gave her maid to Jacob as a wife and her maid bore two sons. After the first of her maid's sons was born, Leah said *“How fortunate!”* and after the second was born she said *“Happy am !! For women will call me happy.”* Yes, she felt very fortunate and happy because she was leading the competition again.

But, Leah wasn't satisfied yet. After her fifth son was born, she said *“God has given me my wages, because I gave my maid to my husband.”* And after her sixth son was born, she said *“God has endowed me with a good gift: now my husband will dwell with me, be-*

(Continued on page 7)

cause I have borne him six sons.” As it turns out, Rachel had the last word in this fight because her sons, Joseph and Benjamin, were Jacob’s last and favorite sons.

God put Leah’s story in the Bible in Genesis 28 and following chapters for a reason. Consider the following applications that can be made from her story.

- Physical characteristics such as weak eyes or beauty don’t determine our worth in the sight of God. Leah’s weak eyes didn’t prevent her from focusing on her sister’s most vulnerable spot, her inability to have children. And Rachel’s beauty turned ugly when she was competing with her sister. I Samuel 16:7 says *“God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* Regardless of how the outside looks, it’s the content of a person’s heart that matters to God.
- Children are a gift from God according to Psalm 127:3. They are to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD (Eph. 6:4). They are not supposed to be stuck in the middle of bad relationships between the adults in their lives or used as some kind of leverage. This kind of bad behavior by adults can rob children of their innocence and trusting nature. Jesus instructs us in Matthew 18 to humble ourselves as a child and not to cause the little ones to stumble.
- Sisters in the flesh and in Christ must love and help each other. Jealousy and competition can ruin any relationship.

Galatians 5:15 says: *“But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”* The love and encouragement of sisters is invaluable. When we encourage and build someone up, we realize how much we need encouragement and building up ourselves. In 1 Thessalonians 5, there is a lot of instruction concerning relationships. We are told to live in peace with one another, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men, and seek after that which is good for one another.

- God can use any situation to accomplish His will. The competition between Leah and Rachel resulted in the founding of the nation of Israel, coming from their twelve sons. Their hostility toward each other didn’t stop God’s plans to make Abraham a great nation. God doesn’t need our cooperation. It is not for God’s benefit, but for our benefit, to live in peace with the people in our lives.
- God knows our afflictions. He knew what Leah was going through and He blessed her with children. God knows our struggles too. He hears our prayers. Hebrews 4:16 says: *“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”*

We live in a different time and place than Leah, but we are still subject to the

same challenges of life that she faced. Let us learn from her story and be thankful to God for the blessing of His word which instructs us in how to be pleasing to Him.

Miriam

Delilah Zeigler

As a child, there were times when my parents would say, “You are getting a little too big for your britches.” This comment was usually a result of my behaving in a presumptuous manner and perhaps arrogantly self-inflating my position of authority. This scolding was a reminder of my role as a child and that I was still under the authority of my parents. For some reason, this verbal reprimand came to mind as I was studying and preparing to write this article about Miriam.

In the Old Testament, we read about Miriam’s strengths and weaknesses and learn from them. In Exodus 2, we learn about Miriam bravely watching over her infant brother, Moses, while he lay in a basket in the bulrushes at the river’s bank. Then, in Exodus 15, we learn that Miriam, the prophetess, led the women as she sang praises to God after the Israelites had escaped Pharaoh and triumphantly crossed the Red Sea. Miriam’s life had been one of service, leadership, and great influence. In Micah 6:4, God says, *“I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.”* Miriam was a gift to the people from God, and God had given her an influential position in her community. However, like many of us, Miriam eventually was no longer content with the authority and influential role God had

given her, and she wanted more.

In Numbers 12, we read that Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. This disapproval of Moses’ marriage seems to be just the excuse they needed to question their secondary positions of leadership. Then we see their real motive in Numbers 12:2, they said *“Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?”* These two siblings are really complaining about not being equal in power and authority with their brother. We have all experienced this. Out of jealousy and envy, we tear down others or find fault in them to justify what we really desire. This happens in our families, at work, in the church, and can be a dangerous, destructive path. James 3 warns us, *“So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.”*

God heard what Miriam and Aaron said about Moses, and He was not pleased. *“At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, ‘Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting.’ And the three of them came out.”* Num 12:4 As we continue reading in Numbers 12, we learn that God reminded Miriam and Aaron of His special relationship with Moses and of the authority that God had given Moses. Then in verses 9 through 10, *“And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed. When the*

(Continued on page 9)

cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow.”

We learn more about authority in the New Testament in Romans 13. *“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”* After studying God’s word, we quickly realize that everyone lives under some kind of authority. Women who are married willingly taking a place of submission under their husbands; an authority established by God. At work, we are in subjection to bosses and supervisors, an authority established by God. In the church, we have leaders we are to support and follow; an authority established by God. Therefore, resentment, discounting, and dishonoring authority is rebellion against God. We learn from Miriam that rebellion against God will bring judgment.

Miriam’s leprosy was a dramatic sign that Moses was God’s chosen leader, and that Miriam’s and Aaron’s authority, while still important, was less than Moses’. It was sinful for Miriam to question Moses’ authority; an authority established by God. It is sinful for us today to question the roles that God has given us, or behave in a way that we presume to have more authority. God’s Word is full of examples and lessons, like this one with Miriam that we can apply to our everyday lives. Miriam’s story is a lesson that reminds us to be content with whatever position of authority God has established for us.

Daughters of Zelophehad

Carol Fertig

In an exciting time for the nation of Israel, five women of the tribe of Manessah found themselves in a quandary. Moses and Eleazar, Aaron’s son, had made a careful census of God’s people. The land promise made to Abraham and repeated to Isaac, then Jacob, was about to be fulfilled as the people stood on the border, and the wilderness wandering was over. It was for this purpose and for this time that God had formed His people into a nation. The five daughters of Zelophehad, however, had no cause for rejoicing. Their situation was precarious to say the least.

Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, daughters of Zelophehad, had no part in the inheritance of the land as things stood. They were unmarried, had no father or brother; they had none to protect or provide for them. They existed in a sort of no man’s land in their culture. It seems the only recourse they had would be to become slaves. Marriage without a dowry from a father was out of the question and would leave one part of their problem, the continuation of their father’s lineage, unsolved. Despite being tragic personally for these women, they did have several things in their favor: their trust in God, their negotiating skill, and their knowledge of who they were.

The five sisters seemed to be united in their efforts; they stood together. They understood that they needed to approach God’s representatives, ultimately God, for redress of their troubles. Studies have been made

(Continued on page 10)

and written concerning the marginalization of women in the Bible, but for this examination it is enough to say that it had to be highly unusual for five women to approach the leadership on their own behalf. Numbers 27:2 says, *“And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting ...”* Surely their knees were shaking, their mouths were dry, and their hearts were racing, but they had courage from the righteousness of their cause. Trust in God is implied. To face head-on the proper source for relief from their problem rather than whispering in shadows or playing political games is courageous and proper, and resulted in a positive outcome for the women. The gathering being held at the entrance to the tent of meeting where God met with Moses, gave the meeting authenticity and power.

The points the sisters brought before God’s representatives were clear and pertinent. Their lineage was known, but they reminded the leaders that their father had been loyal to Moses and did not take part in the shameful rebellion of Korah. They asked why their father’s name should die out of his clan only because he had no son. He **did** have issue, but they were daughters, not sons. They asked to be given their father’s portion of the inheritance. Moses then took the problem to God. (Num 27:5)

The answer God gave to Moses was righteous, of course, and also far-reaching. The Lord said the daughters of Zelophehad were right and gave them the full inheritance of their father. He went farther and established this decision to stand in all other like

instances where the only children of a man were daughters, thus effectively changing the old laws of inheritance. He carried the possible situation even farther. If there was no daughter, then the inheritance went to the father’s brothers, and if there were no brothers, the heirs would be the father’s uncles. If his father had no brothers and no uncles, the inheritance would be given to the nearest kinsman. The intent is obviously to keep the inheritance within the clan. There would need to be more clarification later, but at this point God told Moses this would be a statute and rule for the people of Israel. (Num 27:11) The quest of these women for fairness in inheritance led to a change in the laws for the whole nation!

Farther clarification was needed when the heads of the father’s houses of the tribe of Manasseh began to consider what would happen to the land belonging to Zelophehad’s daughters when they married. If they married into a different clan, their land, their inheritance, would become part of the clan into which they married thus diminishing the holdings of Manasseh. They brought the problem to Moses, the chiefs, and heads of the fathers’ houses of the people of Israel. Through Moses, the Lord agreed with them and said, *“. . . concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, ‘Let them marry whom they think best, only they shall marry within the clan of the tribe of their father.’”* Num 36:6 In that way the inheritance of each tribe would remain intact.

It is to their credit that *“The daughters of Zelophehad did as the Lord commanded Moses.”* Num 36:10 All five married sons of their father’s brothers, so that the inher-

(Continued on page 11)

itance remained in the holdings of Manasseh. The women and their actions are an example to us today when we have a problem. We must know whom to approach as the sisters did. We approach the same God, if a little less directly, through His Holy Word. We must study to know what our position is and should be, then pray for God's guidance. There is every evidence that the women's attitude was one of humility, reverence, and acceptance, and so should ours be. It is hoped that in a stressful and frightening time we could be as courageous as Zelophehad's daughters. There is a proper way to do things if we truly want to be righteous. Finally, we must be grateful for a God/Father who cares for us and listens when we approach Him. We respectfully obey what He sets out for us to

Rahab the Harlot

Jamye Parks

In Joshua 2, two spies were sent to look over the land of Canaan, especially Jericho. The spies went to Jericho and stayed with Rahab, a known prostitute. The king of Jericho heard that some Israelites came to spy and he asked Rahab to bring them out. Rahab, knowing the spies were men of God, lied to her king and told him she had sent them away and saw them leave the city gates just as they were closing. Meanwhile, she has the spies hidden away on her roof under some flax stalks. She tells the men she knows they are men of God. She's heard about the miracles performed and knows that this is going to be their land. She asks them to please protect her and her family and she will help them and not tell where

they are. They agree to this, saying they owe her their lives for what she has done for them. The spies tell Rahab after they are gone to hang a scarlet cord in her window and gather all her family in her house and no harm will come to them. She does what they tell her and her family is spared when the Israelites come to destroy Jericho.

Later, Rahab marries one of the spies, Salmon. Together they are in the lineage of Christ *"...and Salmon the father of Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse and Jesse the father of David the king..."* Mt 1:5

The story of Rahab is an encouraging story of faith, courage, grace and the transforming power of God. Spiritually, Rahab was not in the ideal circumstance to come to faith in the one true God, the God of Israel. She was a citizen of a wicked city that was under God's condemnation. Her "trade" was steeped in depraved and corrupt behavior. But Rahab was an intelligent and very well informed woman due to the various men she came in contact with. She heard stories of how the Israelites were to be feared, their exit from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the wilderness wanderings. She heard and learned enough to come to the saving conclusion: *"For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."* Josh 2:11. Rahab shows great faith and courage when she lies to the king of Jericho in order to protect the Israelite spies. If she had been caught, she would have surely been put to death. But she knew they were men of God and ultimately put her faith in God above her own safety.

(Continued on page 12)

God's grace is also seen in Rahab's story. Rahab was a prostitute, but she was instrumental in serving God's purpose and later was in the lineage of Christ. Even though she lived a life of sin, through faith, obedience and devotion to God she changed her life. In Hebrews she's listed with other saints of great faith. *"By faith Rahab, the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she has given a friendly welcome to the spies."* Heb 11:31

Rahab is a good example to us today. No matter what degree of sin we may be involved in or what our background is, God can transform us from sin to doing great and important work that furthers His kingdom.

Deborah and Jael

Alyssa Johnson

Deborah and Jael teach us powerful lessons about living courageous lives. Have you ever been in a situation where your job doesn't fall within the mainstream? Has God given you tremendous talents that He calls upon you to use within the framework of His word? Have you been faced with a challenge against seemingly insurmountable odds? Have you been called upon to lead when that wasn't your first choice? Have you stood face to face against a powerful foe of God and your next action took strength, bravery, and might to defeat the foe? If you have found yourself in these circumstances, then look to Deborah and Jael as kindred spirits and learn from their example.

Please read Judges 4:1-23. Deborah filled traditional as well as non-traditional roles, but all were God given. She was a wife, a prophetess and judge of Israel. God blessed

her with the wisdom and the spirit to lead the people and she was able to do so with humility. We all have God-given talents and while we do not receive spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands as Timothy did, Paul's admonition still holds true in using our talents without fear. *"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."* 2 Tim 1:6-7

Deborah did not force her leadership upon the people when delivering the Israelites from Jabin, king of Hazor, but followed the word of God, sharing God's command with Barak that he should lead the army of Israel to defeat Sisera and his 900 chariots of iron. Perhaps, Deborah recalled the words of Moses at the end of his life, *"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."* Deut 31:6 Barak, however chose not to rely on God alone, but said that he would not go up to battle without Deborah by his side. God agreed to let Deborah go but promised that Sisera would be defeated at the hand of a woman, not by Barak. Women are placed into situations, even in the family, where they are required to lead - for example, as a single parent and while not ideal this role can be embraced with courage by depending on the Lord. Peter encourages women to live their lives as Deborah did, without fear adorning themselves with *"the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit."* 1 Pet 3:3-6

(Continued on page 13)

The next woman in this lesson faced the enemy head on and again used the resources that God had provided – a home, warm milk, a blanket, and a tent peg – to defeat the foe. The image of Jael driving a tent peg through Sisera’s temple is a powerful one and the fortitude that it would have taken to kill an enemy in that way is hard to imagine. But Jael was fighting for God and we can summon the same power and resilience that Jael had in withstanding our spiritual foe, the Devil.

While our battle is not against flesh and blood as Deborah and Barak and Jael’s were, it is against an even stronger more powerful one. God directs us in how we can be victorious against *“the spiritual forces of evil.”* In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul writes, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perse-*

verance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” Notice the strength and power and might that God provides to us every day if we will take hold of it.

When your courage is waning or you are faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge look to the example God has left for us in Deborah and Jael and remember Paul’s words in Philippians 1:20, *“I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”*

Abigail

Ron Gray

In the days when *“the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul,”* David was anointed king of Israel and *“the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.”* Saul, the man who was taller and more handsome than anyone in Israel was fading in his role as king and was determined to do whatever it took to rid himself of the popular young David who would take the throne. In so doing, Saul was fighting against the will of God to his own detriment. In the words of Christ spoken to another Saul, *“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”* Acts 9:5b

David and his mighty men roamed the wilderness eluding Saul’s constant threats. While in the wilderness of Paran, David’s

(Continued on page 14)

men protected the servants and assets of a “very rich” man called Nabal; he had 3000 sheep and 1000 goats. After this, David sent his young men to ask if Nabal might compensate him with “whatever you have at hand.” Nabal, who was “harsh and badly behaved” said, *“Who is David? – Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat... and give it to men who come from I do not know where?”* 1 Sam 25: 3, 10-11

Upon hearing Nabal’s response, David was ready for retaliation and *all* were strapping on their swords. But, one of Nabal’s servants told Abigail (Nabal’s wife) that harm was on its way to the entire household.

Abigail was a “discerning and beautiful” lady and she made haste to remedy this situation, by bringing a huge quantity of food and wine for David and his men. Falling on her face before David, she spoke humbly, asking for forgiveness, and spoke wisely telling David, *“the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt.”* Your life will be *“bound in the bundle of the living.”* But, the lives of your enemies *“he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling.”* She had very likely heard the story of David’s prowess in the use of the sling against his enemies.”

“And David said to Abigail, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!’” - “Go up in peace to your house.” 1 Sam 25:32-33, 35

Abigail returned home to a drunken husband who was having a lavish feast as though he were a king. She went to him, but discretely waited until the morning light

when the wine had worn off, to tell him what had taken place. She avoided making a scene at her husband’s feast. She wisely avoided the wrath of a drunken husband who was known for his harshness and foolish behavior. However, she did not hide any part of the truth from her husband and was willing to deal with the consequences of her actions. When she told Nabal what she had done to save him and his riches from David’s wrath, God caused Nabal to *“become as a stone.”* He died ten days later.

When David heard the news of Nabal’s death, he blessed the Lord for intervening and for keeping him from wrongdoing. He then sent his servants to bring Abigail to him, so that he could take her for his wife.

Abigail was not taken as a spoil of war or as a payment of any kind. David obviously recognized attributes in her which were to be prized. She displayed kindness and generosity in bringing the provisions for David and his men. She showed courage in coming directly to David, knowing that he was ready for revenge. She showed wisdom clothed in humility when she asked David to consider her husband’s foolish ways and to disregard his rash words. She never shirked her responsibility as a wife, even to go to her harsh husband about what she had done to save his household, knowing that he would not kindly accept her words or her deeds.

Abigail is a good example for women today who may have husbands that have little regard for Christian virtues. She was submissive to her husband and had his best interests at heart, but she also realized that she could not and would not use him as an

(Continued on page 15)

excuse to hide from her responsibility. When a choice was required of her, she bravely did the right thing. Her wise words spoken to David proved her knowledge of God and His plan for David. She also knew that the Lord would deal with Nabal in His own time.

Abigail married David and followed him to the land of the Philistines where he took up residence to thwart Saul's relentless pursuit. (1 Sam 27:3) She bore David's second son, Chileab. (2 Sam 3:3)

Jezebel

Sharon Campbell

When we read about Jezebel, we can easily ascertain that this was one wicked and vile woman. Her reputation as a villain even extends outside of the Bible. For example, no one names their beautiful new daughter Jezebel, in the same way no one would name their son Adolph. However, take Jezebel outside of her timeline, and put her in today's society, and she would be no villain. In fact, I believe that she would be praised and held in high esteem. This might sound crazy and shocking, and it should be. But, hang with me for a minute and I'll explain.

We are introduced to Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:31. We read that she is the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. In a likely political arrangement, she married Ahab, king of Israel. The kingdom of Israel at its birth began a tradition of idol worship, when Jeroboam set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel. We read that Ahab continues in those sins and takes it a step (or several steps) further and builds an altar for Baal and erects an Asherah. He worshiped the idols of Jezebel and began a fast spiral into wickedness

with her. This is just a small glimpse of the power she took for herself as the king's wife.

Jezebel's power grew and became so great that Elijah, a prophet of the Lord, feared for his life and ran to escape after she threatened to kill him (1 Kings 19:2-3).

In 1 Kings 21 we see the full scope of Jezebel's political prowess when we read the account of Naboth's vineyard. The chapter opens with King Ahab asking to purchase a vineyard owned by Naboth. Naboth declines the offer stating that the Lord forbade him to give Ahab the inheritance of his fathers (vs. 3). Ahab then returns home sullen and vexed..., so much so that he does not eat. Jezebel, for all intents and purposes, is floored by Ahab's account and determines that she is going to take care of it. She will get her husband that vineyard! The text tells us that she arranges an elaborate scheme to get Naboth stoned so that Ahab can take the vineyard for his own.

1 Kings 21:25 says, *"Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him."* This is such a powerful verse that speaks to the influence Jezebel had over her husband.

In today's society, someone could look at Jezebel and see a strong, independent woman with great political strength. Someone who will go to any means to get what she wants, when she wants it, by any means necessary. Having daughters, I'm often confronted with this idea of raising 'strong women.' Though it may contradict what the world views as a strong woman, I look at the example in Proverbs 31. To raise a daughter

(Continued on page 16)

who will one day have a husband whose *“heart trusts in her”*, who will do him *“good and not evil all the days of her life.”* A woman who *“opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”* A sharp contrast from the example of Jezebel. Jezebel knew the influence she held over her husband and used that to lead him down a path of wickedness. 1 Peter 3:1-2 tells wives to be submissive to their husbands so that if they are disobedient, they may be won over without a word, but by their chaste and respectful behavior. This is a ‘strong woman’ in the eyes of God. A woman who will submit to her husband, help him walk in the light, and maintain a gentle and quiet spirit. (1 Peter 3:4)

The Shunammite Woman

Alyssa Parks

In 2 Kings 4 we read of the story of the Shunammite woman. She was a wealthy, married woman, however she had no children. Acknowledging that Elisha was a true prophet and man of God, she set up a guest room in her home for him. In return for her and her husband’s hospitality, Elisha asked how he could help the woman. His servant, Gehazi, told Elisha how they had no son and her husband was old. He told the woman that by next year she would have a son.

Of course, she didn’t believe this, but the prophecy was fulfilled and she bore a son. However, many years later, the child became sick and died in his mother’s lap. As soon as this happened, she left to ask Elisha to come and bring back her son. He returned with the Shunammite woman back to where her son

was. In 2 Kings 4:32-35 it tells of how Elisha raised him. First, it tells us, he prayed to God behind a closed door and when he went back out to the child, he laid down on top of him. Elisha aligned his mouth, eyes, and hands to the child’s and his flesh became warm again. He got up and walked back and forth in the house and then Elisha stretched himself onto the child again. The child sneezed seven times and “awoke.” He was alive!

Later, in 2 Kings 8, we see Elisha warn the Shunammite woman and her family to leave for seven years, because the Lord called for a famine. They left for seven full years and when they returned they found that their land had been lost to someone else. However, God performed another miracle and restored all that was hers.

We can draw many important lessons for this great story. One might be that we should do as Elisha did and pray before we do anything. Another lesson may be to always show kindness to fellow Christians, as the Shunammite woman did with Elisha. But, I think, the most important thing to draw from this is, always trust in the Lord. The Shunammite woman’s simple, sincere faith led to an amazing series of events. Elisha was certainly blessed and she knew this. She trusted in his abilities, given to him through God, to heal her son and bring him back from death. And we see her faith and trust in God again when Elisha tells them to leave Shunem. In those days, packing up all your stuff and leaving was not nearly as easy as it is now and the journey was often perilous. So, when the woman and her family leave so quickly based only on what God

(Continued on page 17)

tells them through Elisha, we can see a tremendous amount of faith and fear of the Lord.

So now, I would like to encourage you to do as she did and simply trust the Lord. God is watching over you and helping you constantly in ways you don't even realize. As it says in Matthew 6: 25-26, *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not your life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"* and also in Proverbs 3: 5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* These are only a few of many Bible verses that clearly tell us to trust in the Lord and everything will be taken care of. But, what would've happened if the Shunammite woman didn't trust Elisha and stayed in Shunem? Well, she probably would've died because of the famine. So, never put your own understanding above God's; always trust in Him and good things will follow.

In conclusion, the Shunammite woman was a very hospitable and faithful woman. She showed kindness to a prophet of God, Elisha, and was blessed with a child for this good deed. Even when he fell ill and was overtaken by death, he was brought back by God. Later in life when she lost all her land, God restored all her possessions and lands because of her extraordinary faith.

Gomer

Charlotte Jobe

Her name is only written out once in the bible. Otherwise, she is called a wife, mother, whore, adulteress, her and she. Her unfaithfulness to her husband Hosea, is written as an object lesson for Israel's unfaithfulness to God: Hosea/Jehovah and Gomer/Israel (Hos. 3:1) Hosea would be the last prophet in Israel to warn them before they are taken over by enemies. Through his story and Gomer's, we read of God's great love and desire to bring those to Him who only have Him as their God.

The culture in which Gomer lived was affluent and idolatrous. 2 Kings 14:23-29 tells of this time and compares it to the time Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who set up idols for the 10 tribes to worship. The rebellion of idolatry led to all sorts of sin. As it was in the day of Jeroboam I, so it was during the 41 year reign of Jeroboam II. We see these sins in the New Testament age and our age as well. Romans 1:18-32 reads of dishonorable passions, debased minds, and all manner of unrighteousness arising from idolatry and not honoring God and not being thankful to Him. Immorality and dishonesty were actions that can come from rebellion and prosperity. In part, this happened because of the lack of knowledge of God's word. (Hos. 4:6)

From this sinful world, Hosea takes Gomer as his wife. God names Gomer's first son Jezreel. This name tells of Israel's future. *"I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel."* Hos. 1:4 Gomer has two other children who were possibly from adul-

(Continued on page 18)

terous unions. God names them also: “*Call her name No Mercy*” and “*Call his name Not My People.*” Because Israel departed from God, God departed from them and the Israelites lost their land and identity.

Gomer eventually leaves Hosea, but God directs him to buy her back. He does this with silver and barley (Hos. 3:2). This redeeming factor will be seen in the prophecy given in Hosea 3:5, “*Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.*” This prophecy is fulfilled through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Son of a virgin. Through the redeeming blood of Jesus, God offers Mercy and the right to be called My People.

Lessons to be learned from Gomer’s life:

- We must let God, not the world, say how we live. 2 Pet 1:3,4
- We must think about the consequences of how we live.

“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right And the upright walk in them. But transgressors stumble in them.”
Hos 14:9

- We must contact Jesus’ blood through His plan for redemption. (Eph 1:7)

Anna

Pat Lumpkin

Anna is introduced to us in Luke 2:36-39 shortly after Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. A de-

cree had been sent out by Caesar Augustus requiring everyone to return to his own city to register for the census. This event took place in the time of Herod the Great. See Lu 2:1-21; Mt 2: for more details of Jesus’ birth.

There are only three verses describing Anna but they are powerful and full of information that gives us great insight into her life. The text states that Anna was a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. It is unusual for a woman’s heritage to be declared in the scriptures, but Luke provided us with this information and it helps us to see that although Anna was from one of the lesser tribes and not in the lineage of Christ, God used her to do His will. Anna was very much a part of the few who served God and was looking for the promised Messiah. Anna lived under the Law of Moses and would have been aware of the Old Testament prophecies. Her life most likely had not turned out as she expected, but she made the choice to set her sights on things to come.

By the time of Jesus’ birth, Anna was advanced in years, a widow of about eighty-four years, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. She did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer day and night. Culture at this time encouraged widows to remarry, bear children, to be keepers at home. (1 Tim 5:14). Widowhood often meant a life of extreme difficulty and usually guaranteed a life of poverty unless the widow was fortunate enough to have family assistance. Anna didn’t let her situation pull her down, destroy her faith in God, or grow bitter. She

(Continued on page 19)

went about the Lord's work in anticipation of the coming Savior. (Lu 2:37)

We are not told how Anna come to be at the Temple in Jerusalem, but it appears that she totally dedicated herself to serving God, and God blessed her and took care of her. Most likely Anna would have been in the court of women. This was a raised gallery along three sides of the inner court, marked with a simple colonnade with treasury chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions against a wall. This is most likely the area where Mary and Joseph presented baby Jesus when the days for their purification were completed, as the Law required. It is at this presentation of Jesus that Simeon and Anna appear. (Lev 12:3-8; Lu 2:22-24).

Anna was not alone in waiting for the Savior! (Lu 2:25-38) When Joseph and Mary arrived at the temple they found someone else waiting, a man named Simeon. Luke tells us that Simeon was a very righteous and devout man who was at the temple, waiting for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit came upon him and revealed to him that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. When Jesus and Mary walked into the Temple with Jesus, Simeon took Him in his arms and blessed God, and said, *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation."* Joseph and Mary were amazed at the things being said about Jesus. Just as Simeon finished with his blessing, Anna came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of the Savior to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. From Anna's reaction in Luke

2:38, it is clear she knew who this child was and the significance of His appearing at this moment. The moment Anna had been waiting for had finally arrived! The Old testament prophesies of a coming Savior were coming to pass and she was a true witness of this event that changed the world!

A major lesson from Anna's life is for us to learn to be patient, take courage and serve God, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, whether a widow/widower, married/single, rich/poor, young/old. Life circumstances may not take us down the path we had hoped to travel, but there is room for each of us in God's Kingdom and there is plenty of work for all of us to do. Anna was a very committed servant of God. Her faith was an active faith, extremely dedicated to His service. She knew God's word and shared it with any who would listen. We need to be like Anna (and Simeon) and live our lives with an attitude of worship each day, praising Him and giving thanks for all He has done for us, especially the gift of His Son.

Women at the Cross

Debra Sweet

"Some women were watching from a distance." (Mark 15) I cannot tell you how many times I have read those words and saw in my mind's eye, a group of women, huddled together, as women do, weeping as the dark sky crouched behind them and the wind blew their skirts and furled their head cloths. The picture has always been there, but the fact that they were "watching" from a distance had never, until recently, revealed

its intricacies. While reading the accounts in the gospels, these women became so very human and so much more than some women, watching from a distance!

This group of women, in the background, no doubt wrapped in each other's arms, drawing support from one another as they watched their Lord and Savior nailed to the cross, breathing His last breaths. Listening as He calls out to His mother, they must have had huge lumps in their throats, tears running down their faces and arms struggling to keep each other upright! Oh, yes! These women were standing! They weren't leaning on a rock or resting in the grass. They stood for six hours watching an agonizing, gut wrenching scene. What do you imagine was going through their minds? Were they reliving the recent days when they walked side by side from Galilee to Jerusalem with Jesus? The culture during this time didn't allow for a woman to stand out, especially in a crowd of men. The women weren't allowed to be taught like the men, yet these women had dropped everything and followed our Lord. They had decided to follow Him as He taught the thousands, eager to hear what He had to share. Each knew how He had changed her life, like none had ever done before, and they were more than willing to model and share the news.

We give some thought to who some of these women were and to why their paths crossed at the cross. They came to Jerusalem, following in the footsteps of Jesus. They were witnessing the teaching of thousands, a number by the way, in which they weren't even included! They no doubt had been swept up in the previous day's joyful,

promising gatherings and then were thrown into the unsettling horrors of the accusations, arrest, and finally the brutality and cruelties of the Roman crucifixion. And yet, these women, I'll remind you, STOOD at a distance, watching!

So, who were they? Matthew lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Mark mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome. Luke includes Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others. John places Mary, Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Little is known about a few of these women, however the mere mention of their names is significant historically.

The most familiar of this elite group was Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was following her son. Like most mothers, I'm sure she enjoyed watching Him share the scriptures and His knowledge. She was probably touched by His tender, loving heart and His passion for this ministry. I wonder if she still wondered about why the gift of myrrh had been brought at His birth? Was she haunted by Simeon's words in the temple? "... *A sword will pierce your soul.*" Lu 2:34-35 Yet, she stood watching her son in agony. Oh! I am sure she longed to do this for Him! Imagine the overwhelming suffering as the scripture is fulfilled and He speaks to her, and then the tender moment when he seeks out one to take care of her!

Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all the accounts. We know that Jesus cast out sev-

(Continued on page 21)

en demons from this Mary. Many had tried to heal her, but only this man had been successful. Her gratitude was genuine and she was eager to share her experience and belief, as well as financial support from her own purse. She was present at the crucifixion, watching helplessly as her Savior and friend suffered. Mary was the first witness of Jesus' resurrection. She was completely devoted to Jesus and provided steadfast attention and love.

Solome, Zebedee's wife and mother of the "sons of thunder," was also present at the cross. Their family operated a fishing business in Galilee. Salome had social status, as well as monetary resources, which proved to be a valuable assets as she followed Jesus.

Joanna was married to Cuza, Herod Antipas' personal household steward. Jesus had also healed Joanna and Herod was probably aware of this transformation. She too, was in a social position that allowed her to share Jesus' teachings. Joanna also supported Jesus' ministry financially.

Mary, the wife of Clopas (also translated as Alphaeus) may have been the mother of "James the son of Alphaeus." She is said to have been healed from evil spirits and infirmities. Mary's sister and Susana are also included in this group. Many other women are listed, yet not by name.

These real women, with real needs, did not stand idly by! They found a way to serve. We do not have a record of anyone directly telling them what to do, they just **did!** They offered themselves, as well as the financial means they possessed. Remember that culturally they were not accustomed to

an active role. They probably helped plan and prepare meals for the followers. The daily shopping and planning were tasks they were qualified and trained to exercise.

A study has shown that during stress, men and women experience an initial rush of adrenalin. Men will respond with the "fight or flight" response, but women react with a "tending and befriending" response. Isn't God's plan marvelous? He supplies! During Christ's hours of abandonment, the women stayed.

These women were at the cross to fulfill a need and to provide an example. We, as women, can learn from these pioneering women who STOOD and WATCHED! The servant's heart was displayed in great style that day at the cross!

Sapphira

Kelli Hinton

Scrolling through Facebook and Instagram, we are bombarded with pictures and statuses of our friends taking the "perfect trip" with their "perfect family." What is not shown on Facebook is that they had to go into major debt in order to go on that trip, it took 100 pictures just to capture that one picture that was showing the family all happy and looking "perfect," that the kids were arguing with each other the whole trip and that the mom and dad aren't even talking because they are fighting about money and the amount of debt that they are accruing, and the depression that sets in for that family. Usually these pictures are accompanied

(Continued on page 22)

with words like, “Having a great time at Disney World!” or “We are all so excited to be on this family trip together!” The question is this...why does it bother us to see these statuses of our friends on Facebook? Why do we allow ourselves to get jealous over a snapshot in time and not think about the whole background story that went on in order to capture that one “perfect” moment?

We have all heard the phrase “keeping up with the Joneses.” However, doesn’t it seem like we are going above and beyond that these days? We aren’t just trying to keep up with the Joneses, but we are trying to outdo them, more and sooner than them. This seems to be what Ananias and Sapphira did. They were not required to sell their property or give all of the proceeds to the apostles. So, why, in Acts 5:1-2, did Ananias, with Sapphira’s knowledge, tell the apostles that he gave it all? Had they fallen into the trap we sometimes do by wanting to outdo the Joneses? Did they do it just so they could be seen by others? But, in Acts 5:3-4, Peter called him out on it and told him that he *“did not [just] lie to men, but to God.”* Ananias fell down and died at that very moment. They took him out and buried him, and just 3 hours later, Sapphira showed up and was asked if they sold the land for so much. She said yes and immediately, she fell down and died as well. Acts 5:11 said that *“great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”*

What can we learn from Sapphira? The first lesson is that we need to be content in whatever situation we are in, as we read in Philippians 4:11. They were giving their money to the apostles, so, they should have

been content with that amount that they were giving and not lied about it. Acts 5:4 gives us our second lesson – when we lie, we are not just telling lies to someone, but to God. God is omniscient (He knows ALL things). There is not a single thing that we can keep from God. We may be able to lie to others with our Facebook statuses and pictures, but God always knows the truth! The third lesson that we can extrapolate from this event is that our spouse has a big influence on us. We don’t know who thought of lying about this between Ananias and Sapphira, but they were able to influence one other into having the same thoughts. I need to constantly think about the influence I am to my spouse – am I leading him toward God with my speech and actions or away from God?

Next time you are scrolling through Facebook or Instagram, remember that what you are seeing is just a snapshot in time and doesn’t necessarily contain the whole story. Also, remember to be content in all things, help lead your spouse to God in all things, but most importantly, remember that God knows and sees everything – we can’t lie to Him.

Priscilla

Amber Parks

In Acts 18:24-28 it is recorded that a man named Apollos was preaching in the synagogue. He was a very eloquent man, was fervent in spirit, and competent in the scriptures. However, he was preaching the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took

(Continued on page 23)

him aside and taught him the scriptures more accurately. He went on to be a great servant and "powerfully refuted the Jews in public." In Ephesians 4:15-16 it is written, *"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the whole body grow so that it builds itself up in love."* Priscilla went with Aquila in love to build Apollos up in the truth. The result was that Apollos went on to spread the truth.

Priscilla didn't let anything stop her from going to Apollos in the right way so that she could build him up in truth and in love. Matthew 7:17-18 says, *"So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit."* We can tell what kind of tree Priscilla was by looking at her fruit. Apollos having gone on to be a great help in the kingdom of God says a lot about him and those who helped him. Priscilla was obviously a great servant herself. She put her talents to good use and went about her work in a proper way so as to glorify God to the fullest. She was not timid in her work, and despite Apollos being the kind of man many would be intimidated by, Priscilla still went with Aquila to teach him the full truth. This allowed Apollos to use his talents in a more proper way so the body could grow and build itself up in love even further.

God expects you to properly perform your role just as Priscilla did. In Romans 12:6-8 it says, *"Having gifts that differ according*

to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." We shouldn't just be performing our role, we should perform it properly which means with zeal, cheerfulness, and a fervent spirit. Again seen in Romans 12:11, *"do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."* As Christians we are to serve the Lord and His church, not expect to be served by the church. In John 13:1-20 it is recorded that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus humbled Himself from heaven and came to earth and even further He humbled himself to washing the feet of His followers. He is our ultimate example and we should strive to be servants like Him.

In Matthew 5:3 it is written, *"blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* If we have an attitude of humility and servitude it will lead us to speak the truth in love. If we speak the truth with pride and haughtiness less people are likely to listen. If Priscilla and Aquila had gone to Apollos, and made him feel lesser than them for not knowing the whole truth, it's very likely he would not have gone on to be the great help to believers that he was. When we build others up and humble ourselves, that is when we are truly being servants. Romans 12:16 says, *"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited."* We are expected to build one another up in love and everyone is capable of doing that work.

Dinah

Steven Baxley

One of the lesser known women in the Bible is Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah, and full-sister of six of Jacob's sons. The events surrounding Dinah are one of the central elements to understanding Jacob's family in Canaan. This story is found in Genesis 34.

Jacob had settled his family outside of the city of Shechem, and purchased the plot of land where he had pitched his tent (Gen 33:18-19). It was here, where Dinah "*went out to see the women of the land.*" Gen 34:1 Shechem, the son of the ruler of the city, saw Dinah, seized her and raped her. Afterwards, he decided that he wanted her to be his wife. Jacob's family would only agree to this if all the males of the city were circumcised, thus allowing marriages between them and Jacob's people. While the men were recovering, Levi and Simeon went into the city and killed all the men, and recovered Dinah and brought her out and back to her family (34:25-26). Jacob seems to have been concerned mostly with how this would make the family's situation tenuous in Canaan (34:30). Levi and Simeon are far more concerned with Dinah's honor than with whatever the political ramifications might be (34:31). Jacob would remember this episode later when he blessed each of his sons before his death (Gen 49:5-7).

It is impossible to draw any conclusions about what was going on in Dinah's mind during all of this. In fact, Dinah drops from the Biblical narrative except for a brief mention in Genesis 46:15. The story is primarily

concerned with what happened to her and how that was dealt with by the family.

However, some things can be understood from the phrase that she "*went out to see the women of the land.*" This seems to indicate an unhealthy curiosity with the pagans among whom Jacob's family was living. It would have also been very unusual for her to do this on her own (there is no indication from the text that anyone was with her, and most certainly her brothers would have prevented the rape had they been there). She would have been old enough to have been of an age to marry, but young enough to still be unmarried. This would likely put her in her early to mid-teens, considered an adult in the society of the time.

Although Dinah bore NO responsibility for Shechem's actions, she did show a certain amount of naiveté and made a foolish decision that put herself in harm's way. Since this decision was based primarily on a desire to observe, and likely interact with the pagan women, it certainly demonstrates a lack of good judgment on her part.

There is a lesson here for us. Sometimes decisions that we make are not sinful, but they may lead to a situation that causes harm, either spiritual or physical. God describes another such situation in Proverbs 7:6-27, where a youth is portrayed as lacking sense, and ends up in the clutches of the adulteress. There doesn't seem to be an indication that he specifically set out to do that, but it resulted from his lack of good decision-making. Jesus tells us to "*be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*" Mt 10:16 A good lesson to remember in all aspects of our lives!