



Queens & Other Influential Women

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It has been said that “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” (William R. Wallace) Mothers have great power as they shape the future by influencing the way their children develop and grow up. In addition to this formative, nurturing role in the home, women also greatly influence the direction, quality and spontaneity of everyday life outside the home.

For this publication we’ve selected biblical women who seized the initiative at pivotal moments and quietly accomplished God’s will, influenced others to do so, or used their influence for evil. For example, Queen Esther. *“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* Est 4:14

Other influential women probably come to your mind as well. For instance in Judges 4, Deborah, the lone female judge, wife and prophetess, communicated the LORD’s commandment faithfully to Barak — engage the Canaanites and deliver Israel from 20 years of harsh oppression. And you’ll probably also remember Barak’s reticence to execute these orders by himself. *“Then Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’”* 4:8 Deborah responded, *“I will surely go with you, nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.”* 4:9 Without hesitation, Deborah arose and went with Barak. The Canaanites were routed, but the enemy commander fled. Providentially he came to the tent of Jael, another influential woman with her trustee hammer and tent peg.

Table Of Contents

Introduction Phil Lumpkin	1
Mary Elizabeth Maxwell	2
The Shunammite Woman Gary Mangus	4
The Women At The Cross Lindsay Green	6
Jezebel Delilah Zeigler	8
Rahab Cynthia Garner	10
Abigail Ron Gray	11
Michal Carol Fertig	13
Lois & Eunice Ephriam Davis	15
Esther Karen Parks	17
Miriam Mark Gray	18
Jehoshabeath Olivia Zeigler	19

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Mary, Mother of Jesus

Elizabeth Maxwell

Mary played a crucial role in God's plan of salvation, as He found favor in her and she would go on to conceive and give birth to Jesus, while still a virgin. In Luke Chapter 1 we read that Mary was identified as the favored one who would carry the Son of God and her reaction to this proclamation. It was recorded in verses 26-27 that an angel, Gabriel, was sent from God to Nazareth and appeared to Mary. She was a virgin engaged to Joseph, they were both descendants of David. He said to her (v28), *"Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."* Mary was greatly troubled by this statement and she kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be (v29). The angel continued by saying to her (v30-33) *"Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."* Mary was confused by this and her response was (v34) *"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"* The angel answered and said to her (v35), *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God."* The angel went further to explain that even her relative, Elizabeth, who was barren had also conceived and was in her sixth month – *"For nothing will be impossible with God"* (v36-37). At this point, Mary began to believe and accept the news and said, *"Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word."* The angel departed from her and Mary arose and went hastily to the city of Judah to see Elizabeth (v38-39).

We continue reading in Luke Chapter 1 of the significant events that took place when Mary entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth (v40), who was in her six month of carrying John the Baptist. Verse 41-42: *"And it came about that when Elizabeth had heard Mary's greeting the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'"* It was evident that Elizabeth and her baby felt blessed to be in her presence and she continued by saying that *"And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."* (v43-45). By this time Mary had gladness in her heart and she said (v46-48) *"My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant: For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed."*

Luke Chapter 2 records the account of Jesus' birth in a manger in the city David, which is called Bethlehem (v1-7) and how an angel of the Lord appeared before shepherds in the field to share the great news: *"For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* (v8-12) After the angels had departed, the shepherds went hastily to Bethlehem to find their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as He

lay in the manger (v15-16). When they had witnessed this, *"they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."* (v 17-19). One can imagine the level of emotion that Mary must have been feeling at this time. The birth of our children is one of the most special times in our lives, and Mary's Child was Son of the Most High, which came with a whole new level of significance and attention, whether it be good or bad.

Shortly after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph fled with Him to Egypt because Herod was going to kill all of the male children from two years old and under (Matthew 2) and they remained there until after Herod was dead. Jesus grew up with his earthly parents in Nazareth. When He was twelve years old, He went with them up to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-42). When they were returning, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem and His parents were initially unaware of it (Luke 2:43). They and their relatives went searching for Him, and (v44-47) *"it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers."* (v48) *"And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."* Jesus' response surprised

(Continued on page 4)

them. He said (v49) *"Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"* It is recorded in verse 50 that Mary and Joseph did not understand the statement which He made to them. But when He returned to Nazareth with them (v51) *"He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart."*

Throughout the course of Mary's life and role as the mother of Jesus, she had life experiences that were in many ways different from that of any other mother. Not only did she conceive while still a virgin, but she also raised the Son of God and we are told that she pondered these things in her heart. It is evident that her role in Jesus' upbringing was different than that of a normal mother/child relationship. She treasured her time with Him, but He had a divine purpose to accomplish and at times Mary struggled with understanding the full scope of this mission – even up until the point of His death. *"What shall I say, 'Father save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour."* Jn 12:27b He fully understood His mission, but that made Mary's role as His mother both unique and heartbreaking at the same time. Yet even though she didn't fully understand her Son's mission we see her gentle influence working to nurture, guide and prepare Him to accomplish His Father's will.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary, what if she had said "no?" She was not forced to obey. She was asked to conceive and bear a child out of wedlock ; undermining her godliness and humiliating her family and her finance'. Her gentle reply and godly influence ushered in the hope of the world.

Page 4

The Shunammite Woman

Gary Mangus

There was a wealthy Shunammite woman who demonstrated generous hospitality and faith in God. She and her husband lived in Shunem. One day she noticed a traveler on the path and *"urged him to eat some food,"* and he did. After this, when he traveled by, he would stop there to eat. Observing his need for rest, she convinced her husband to build a chamber, a small upper room on the wall, with a bed, a table, a chair, and a candle on a stand for *"the man of God"* to turn into to rest when he comes again. (2 Kgs 4:8-10)

One day Elisha stopped and turned into the chamber and rested there. Having noticed all the care done for him, Elisha wanted to repay her in some way for her hospitality. He had his servant, Gehazi call the Shunammite and say, *"look you have taken all this trouble for us, what can be done for you? Perhaps a word spoken to the King or to the army commander?"* She answered, *"I dwell among my own people."* Then Elisha wondered with Gehazi, what can be done for her? And he offered; she has no son, and her husband is old. Elisha said, *"Call her."* And she came up and stood in the doorway. And he said, *"At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son."* And she exclaimed, *"No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant."* But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her." 2 Kgs 4:11-17

Out of excitement for the news, she had blurted, *"don't you lie to me!"* It's like saying

(Continued on page 5)

she believed Elisha as “the man of God”, but the promise was too good to be true! We can compare her response to Sarah’s response when she was told that she would have a child. Sarah wanted to believe, but had weak faith. Remember Sarah laughed when she was promised a son. She was very old and past the age of childbearing. God blessed her anyway and she had Isaac at around age 90. (Genesis, chapters 18-21.) The Shunammite woman was blessed with a son, though her husband was very old. Both women knew all the praise and glory belonged to God for the birth of their sons.

When the child was older, he went out with his father among the reapers and became ill. The father sent his servant to take him to his mother, *“and the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. Then she called to her husband and said, ‘Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again.’ And he said, ‘Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.’ She said, ‘All is well.’ Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, ‘Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.’ So, she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.”* 2 Kgs 4:18-25

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, *“Look, there is the Shunammite. Run at once to meet her and say to her, ‘Is all well?’”* And she answered, *“All is well.”* And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. Then she said, *“Did I ask my*

lord for a son? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’” He said to Gehazi, *“Take my staff in your hand and go and lay my staff on the face of the child.”* Then the mother said, *“As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”* Elisha then followed her. Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life, and he returned and told him, *“The child has not awakened.”* 2 Kgs 4:25b-31

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed and went in and shut the door and prayed to the LORD. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up and walked once back and forth and went up and stretched himself upon him again. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, *“Call this Shunammite.”* And when she came to him, he said, *“Pick up your son.”* She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out. (2 Kgs 4:32-37)

Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, *“Arise, and depart with your household, and sojourn wherever you can, for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will come upon the land for seven years.”* She arose and did according to the word of the man of God. Her faith was strong and without question she left with her household and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. And at the end of the seven years, when the woman returned

(Continued on page 6)

home, she went to appeal to the king for her house and her land. By God's providence the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, *"Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done."* And while he was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. And Gehazi said, *"My lord, O king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life."* And when the king asked the woman, she told him. Then the king appointed an official to restore all that was hers. Because of her strong faith, God blessed her by restoring all her property, plus all the produce of the fields from the day that she left until that day. (2 Kgs 8:1-6)

The Shunammite woman did not let a tragic event keep her from seeking God's help. When her son died, she was able to tell her husband in no uncertain terms, *"It is well."* What could she possibly have meant other than that she knew God was able to restore her son's life? She did not back down in front of God's prophet Elisha, and she led the prophet back to her son. She boldly confronted the king when it came to appealing for her property. She trusted God for the results. Her faith was tested, and she kept her faith and God restored her son.

We can also imitate the Shunammite woman by showing hospitality. Hospitality is a spiritual blessing that children of God are called on to give. (1 Pt 4:9) Those who extend this blessing are in turn blessed. The woman from Shunem practiced this blessing and is an example to us of courage, faith and hospitality.

Page 6

The Women At The Cross

Lindsay Green

"Greater love has no man than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Jn 15:12 While most of us won't face death for our faith, a group of women in the bible did just that. In the face of extreme adversity, they stood strong and supported Jesus until the very end.

It is interesting as we read the gospels that little is mentioned about the ministry of the women who accompanied Christ. The majority of the focus is directed at the Apostles and male disciples. Yet it is this group of women who will remain by Christ's side until the end, even at the cross, when almost everyone else fled. By looking at these brave women we can draw inspiration and understanding that can be applied to our own lives.

Be a Doer

In Luke 8:1-4 we are introduced to this group. These were women who Jesus had healed and cast demons out of, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others who provided for the ministry financially. But they weren't just supporting Jesus with their finances. They were following Him as disciples and ministering alongside Him giving their time, possessions, influence, and service to Christ and those around Him. It seems safe to assume that they were also friends to Jesus; providing emotional support and encouragement. When Christ travels from Galilee to Jerusalem these women go with him; several days of journey on foot. They left behind friends, family, homes and safe-

(Continued on page 7)

ty to follow Christ. Their lives paint a beautiful picture of what it means to truly follow Christ.

Draw near to Christ

As these women make the long journey from Galilee they see Jesus welcomed and praised as He enters Jerusalem (Mt 21:6-9). It's hard to believe that just five days later Christ would be crucified. Yet no matter how dangerous things became, these women stood by Him. It must have been terrifying to see Jesus hanging on a cross, knowing what He had already suffered and understanding that they too could share His fate. They were surrounded by the chief priest, Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers who would have had no problem crucifying a woman. While others mocked and ridiculed Christ, they mourned for Him (Lu 23:27). When others fled, they stayed, looking on from a distance (Mt 27:55-56). In John 19:25 a small group of these women stood close enough that Jesus is able to speak to them. Even after His death they remain by His side, following to the tomb where His body was laid. Early on the first day of the week they came back with spices to prepare his body for burial (Lu 24:1-2). They are the first to discover the empty tomb and that Christ has risen. Then Christ appears to Mary Magdalene, followed by some of the other women. What an amazing moment as we see them rejoice and worship at His feet. (Jn 20:11-18, Mt 28:9-10) Just like these women, in our darkest times we must draw near and cling to Christ with joy knowing that He is risen.

Comfort one another

What must Mary have felt as she watched her son hang on the cross? As a mom myself I can only imagine the deep sadness, compassion, anger, powerlessness, and distrust in the midst of maddening confusion that she must have experienced. Mary understood better than anyone who Jesus was. She had been with Him since the beginning. I wonder if she remembered His first steps or the first time He said "luv you" as He hung there in agony, her helpless to do anything. And yet, she supported her son in the only way that she could, standing by His side. And she was not alone. In (John 19:25-26) we read her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and the disciple whom He loved are all standing with her. In Mary's time of sorrow, she is surrounded by friends. As this group seeks to bring comfort to Christ, they are also there to support Mary. There was nothing they could do to ease the pain, but they remained steadfast by her side, helping bear the burden. Life is hard, but due to God's infinite wisdom we are not called to face it alone. Jesus understood the need for community so much that we are commanded to love one another as He has loved us (Jn 15:12). This group showed courage as they stood together boldly in the face of adversity, leaving an amazing example for each of us.

The gospel is for all

Isn't it amazing that this brave group of women has given us an eyewitness testimony of Christ's crucifixion, death and resurrection in a time when women in the Jewish community were considered second class citizens? Throughout Jesus' ministry, he al-

(Continued on page 8)

ways treated women as equals and He was surrounded by women who ministered to Him. In Luke 26:6-12 a woman anoints Christ's head with expensive ointment. While some were indignant, Christ was moved by the love and respect she showed as she prepares Him for burial. Christ welcomed these women with open arms as they served and ministered by His side. They each had a place in the kingdom, as do we. But more importantly, Christ died for each of them as he did for each of us. The gospel is for all: man, women, rich, poor, slave and free. What better way to illustrate this than to have a group of women act as witnesses on His behalf no longer under the old law, but equal under the new.

Jezebel

Delilah Zeigler

Jezebel was a princess, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Before we are introduced to Jezebel in 1Kings 16:31, we read of several instances where the nation of Sidon had engaged in conflict with Israel (Josh 13:2-7, Judg 10:12, Ezek 32:30-32). The Sidonians were known for their worship of idols, such as Baal and Asherah, and in the beginning of 1Kings 11, God warned His people against marrying anyone from foreign nations, including Sidon: *"You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods."* The seventh king of Israel, Ahab, ignored God's warning and arranged to marry the princess of Sidon. There is no denying that Jezebel was a strong woman, a woman of power and

influence, but throughout 1 Kings 18-21 we discover that her power and influence were used for evil.

In 1 Kings 18:3-19, we learn that Jezebel was a zealot for the idols of her homeland, and she used her power and resources to support the prophets of Baal and Asherah. After Jezebel killed many of the prophets of the Lord, God sent his prophet, Elijah, to challenge Ahab, Jezebel, and their idol worshiping prophets, and Elijah knew where these prophets could be found – they ate at Jezebel's table. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal, and God defeated them in a very public display at Mt Carmel. *"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, 'Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.'"* 1 Kgs 18:20-39 Elijah then ordered the people of Israel to seize the prophets of Baal and kill all of them. When Ahab told Jezebel that Elijah had killed all 450 prophets of Baal, Jezebel sent a message to Elijah saying, *"So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."* 1 Kgs 19:2 Jezebel was enraged and vengeful, and she used intimidation and threats as she vowed to kill Elijah for killing her prophets of Baal. As queen of Israel, Jezebel used her power for evil. She used it to enforce Baal worship in Israel, and she tried to kill anyone that stood in opposition to her.

In 1 Kings 21, we read about Jezebel's continued ruthless abuse of power and influence. Next door to the king's palace, a man named Naboth owned a vineyard. Ahab offered to purchase Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth refused, *"The Lord forbid that I*

(Continued on page 9)

should give you the inheritance of my fathers (vs. 3).” Ahab went into his house “*sullen and vexed*,” and he went to his bed and refused food. Jezebel learned what was troubling her husband and she told him, “*...I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite* (vs. 7).” So, she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal. In the letters, Jezebel instructed the elders and nobles who lived in the same city as Naboth to setup false witnesses against Naboth and have him stoned to death. After Naboth’s death, Jezebel said to Ahab, “*Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead* (vs. 15).” Once again, Jezebel used her influence and power over the people to lie, steal, intimidate, cheat and murder.

Jezebel’s most potent influence was with *her husband*, and many of Ahab’s decisions reflected Jezebel’s input. II Kings 21:25 says, “*There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited.*” Just as God said, Ahab died in battle but unfortunately, Jezebel’s evil influence did not end with Ahab’s death. Ahab and Jezebel’s son, Ahaziah, became king of Israel, and like his parents, “*He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done.*” I Kgs 22:52-53 Ahaziah’s reign over Israel was brief, and his brother, Jehoram, became king after his death because Ahaziah

had no son. In 2 Kings 9, we read that the Lord appointed Jehu as king of Israel, and Jehu assassinates Jehoram. The Lord’s pronouncement against Ahab in 1 Kings 21 comes to fruition, and Jehoram’s body is thrown on the plot of ground that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite.

After Jehu’s murder of her son Jehoram, Jezebel completes one last gesture of intimidation, and she adorns herself as a queen and asks Jehu, “*Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?*” 2 Kgs 9:31 King Jehu ordered loyal officials to throw Jezebel out of the window to her death. King Jehu ordered her body to be taken for burial, after all, she was a princess and a king’s wife. When the officials went to honor the King’s request, they discovered only her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. Stray dogs had consumed the rest of her flesh, just as the prophet Elijah had prophesied earlier.

Jezebel’s reign as the queen of Israel was one of power and influence – all for evil. She used her power to murder, steal, and lie, and she influenced others, including those in her home, to desert God and follow a sinful lifestyle of worshipping idols. After reading about her wicked ways, some may wonder what God’s purpose is for including her in the Bible. Perhaps her story will cause us to reflect on our own circle of influence and help us realize we do not need to be a queen of a nation to be an influencer. Every day we influence those in our work environment, in our social environment, and the greatest influence we will ever have is with those in our own homes. This impact is powerful and far-reaching, and if we live a life that brings honor and glory to God, then our influence will

Rahab

Cynthia Garner

Rahab is the prostitute-turned heroine-turned ancestor to Jesus. One might think that she's as unlikely an example of a person to emulate, if ever there was one. However, one would be wrong to think that. In the spirit of Steven's 3-point sermons, here are some lessons we can learn from Rahab:

She was not living a desirable life

Everyone knows Rahab as a prostitute. But her lifestyle is more than that. She lived in the pagan city of Jericho but was willing to give up her sinful life. How many people, including Christians, are willing to completely change their lives for Christ? How many of us cling to those things we know aren't right, whether it be sinful acts, pride, complacency, etc.? I think of Lot's wife, who couldn't help but look back at her destroyed city with longing. *"And he overthrew those cities...But Lot's wife...looked back, and she became pillar of salt."* Gen 19:25-26. The thought of leaving the sinful pleasures of Sodom and Gomorrah was more than she could bear. Or the rich man who asked Jesus what he needed to do to be saved. *"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?...When the young man heard this [the he would have to sell his possessions], he went away sorrowful..."* Mt 19:16 and 22. I once heard a preacher say that God doesn't send people to hell. He sends sin to hell, and man will not let go of the sin.

She knew who to align herself with

As the Israelite spies came into Jericho, Rahab tells them, *"Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house..."* Josh 2:12 It is said in 1 Cor 15:33 that *"bad company ruins good morals."* In this same way, Rahab realized that she needed these men. They, through God, could do more for her than her sinful neighbors. It can be difficult to turn away from the crowd. We often think of this when addressing children and teenagers, but it can be just as difficult for adults. What if a family member is homosexual? What if a dear friend asks you to lie for her? We often think in extremes, such as with prostitutes or drunkards, but many sinful acts can be dismissed by us as insignificant or small. We would benefit by looking at sin as God looks at it.

She is proof that God remembers our sins no more

Matthew 1 lists Jesus' lineage, and to the human eye, it would seem unlikely that Rahab is a distant relative. But to the Christian eye, this makes perfect sense. Our God is the God of second chances. And in many cases, third, and fourth, and twentieth chances. God does not hold our past(s) against us when we repent and turn back to Him. There are so many verses that prove this over and over:

Isaiah 43:25 – *I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

Psalms 103:12 – *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our trans-*

(Continued on page 11)

gressions from us

Hebrews 10:17 – *I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.*

When I think of Rahab, the song “Bring Christ Your Broken Life” immediately comes to mind.

*Bring Christ your broken life, so
marred by sin,
he will create anew, make whole
again,
your empty wasted years, he will re-
store
and your iniquity, remember no
more.*

In closing, how often do we let Satan tell us that we are unworthy, that we’ve just done too much and don’t deserve forgiveness? Rahab, like many other Biblical heroes, such as Moses and Paul, have things in their pasts that they aren’t proud of. As do we. And God not only forgave them, as He does us, but He used them as agents in furthering His cause, as He can us.

Abigail

Ron Gray

The scriptures tell us of a husband and wife who cross paths with David, the one that even King Saul has to admit will reign in his place: *“And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that*

the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.” 1 Sam 24:20 – The story of this couple is found in 1 Samuel 25. *“Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved...”* 1 Sam 25:3

We might wonder why a *discerning* lady would marry such a man. He was rich, but that probably did not play a large role in her mind. We need to remember that most marriages at that time and in that culture were arranged by the prospective husband and the father of the bride.

Hearing that Nabal would be sheering his sheep, David sent word by ten of his men that he had been a protector of Nabal’s men and property, and asked for *“whatever [Nabal] had at hand”* for a feast day. Nabal’s answer was harsh. *“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 25:10-11

David was furious when he heard that response! He commanded his men to strap on their swords. David had vowed to kill Nabal and all the men who were with him.

Meanwhile, one of Nabal’s servants told Abigail what had happened and the impending danger that surely would be coming their way. Abigail took charge of the situation and “made haste” gathering massive amounts of meat, grain, fruit, and wine. She knew that they could afford to be generous with this food - the scriptures tell us that Nabal was “very rich;” however Nabal was so selfish that he had no desire to share even what he

(Continued on page 12)

called “**my** water.” Abigail did not tell her husband about this, but rode a donkey out with the offering of food to meet with David.

We see that when Abigail met David, she was wise in addressing him, guiding her point of view without lecturing him. Her words do not seem to come from fear of David’s retribution, but from a respect that David should be shown as the anointed king of Israel.

“When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.” 1 Sam 25:23 She opens her heart to David telling him to ignore Nabal and his rant. His name is “Fool” and he is full of folly. Therefore he is not worthy to be taken seriously. Instead, she says that the guilt should be hers, and tells him that she had not seen David’s men nor heard their request. She asks David to accept the gift for his young men that she, his “servant,” brings and to please forgive her trespass. It appears that Abigail is not excusing her husband’s behavior, but is asking David to let this transaction, discussion, and settlement be between two responsible adults.

Abigail then gives an oration that is filled with prophecy. Because David is fighting the Lord’s battles, evil will not be found in him and the Lord will make of him a “*sure house*,” and if anyone arises against him David will be always be “*bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord [his] God*.” But the enemies of David, God “*shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling*.” Here Abigail recalls the triumph that a younger David had over Goliath. She also says that when God has done all the good that He has spoken to David and has appointed him as

prince over Israel, that he will not suffer the pangs of his conscience for the vengeance that he planned for Nabal and his household. Lastly Abigail humbly asks David, when God has dealt well with him, to remember her.

David praises God for sending Abigail to keep him from bloodguilt. He also praises her, “*blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you...*” He sends her home in peace.

Abigail arrives home to find a drunken Nabal in the midst of a feast fit for a king. She wisely waited for her husband to sober-up and then in the morning, she told him what had transpired. Then, “*his heart died within him and he became as a stone*.” Ten days later the Lord struck him and he died.

These scriptures show a great contrast between a husband and wife. Nabal was foolish, self-centered, and the only reference to his interaction with God was when “*the Lord struck Nabal*.” Abigail showed great judgement, which is the definition of discerning. It would have been easy for her to just give-in to whatever went on at home and blame her foolish husband for her life of subjectivity, but she set her heart upon doing the right thing with godliness and wisdom.

In the end, David did remember Abigail. “*David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife*.” David could not resist the opportunity to take this woman whom the Bible calls “beautiful.” But, in praising her David does not dwell on her beauty at all, he said, “*blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you...*” Thus, Abigail became a wife of the man who was king of Israel and in the direct bloodline of Jesus Christ, a man that God declared to be “*a man after my heart, who will do all my will*.” Acts 13:22

Michal

Carol Fertig

Scripture introduces Michal in 1 Samuel 14:49 as the younger of King Saul's two daughters, and birth order may have been a factor in Michal's life of disappointment and betrayal. David was part of Saul's household, as he was able to soothe Saul's bouts of melancholia, or perhaps some other form of depression with which he was plagued, by playing skillfully on the lyre. David was loyal and devoted to Saul, even after Saul twice tried to pin him to the wall with a spear!

It is hardly surprising that Michal loved David (1 Sam 18:20). He was young, “. . . *ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.*” 1 Sam 16:12 Against all odds he had vanquished the Philistine giant Goliath and was a hero to the Israelites, so that they sang of him: *“Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”* 1 Sam 18:7 Saul hated David and was afraid of him because it was obvious that God was with him as he succeeded in all he did. Saul tried to bring David closer to him by giving his older daughter Merab to him in marriage. David would be anxious to serve his father-in-law in battle and would likely be killed and out of Saul's way. Saul's plan didn't work because of David's humility and integrity.

When David declined marriage to Merab she was given to someone else, and Michal saw an opportunity to have the husband she wanted. She let it be known to her father that she loved David, and it pleased Saul to have a second chance to envision David's death in battle. This time Saul let David be-

lieve he was earning the right to be the king's son-in-law by exacting a price from David for his daughter: 100 Philistine fore-skins. David went above and beyond, killing 200 Philistines, and married Michal. There is never any mention of David's regard for Michal, so it may have been a career move for him, as well as a maneuver by Saul. Both men were using Michal, but Saul was mistaken in thinking she would be loyal to him over her new husband. Michal may have felt that she was considered second best, since David first declined to marry her sister, but she seemed to be pleased by the outcome. (1 Sam 18:19-27).

Saul tired of trying to get David killed in battle; everything David did turned out well! He decided to take a more direct approach and have David murdered in his own bed. Michal learned of the plot, told David of it, and helped him to escape. When called to explain her actions to her father, she lied, saying she helped David because he threatened her life. Not only did she put her husband's welfare over the evil desires of her father, she was instrumental in preserving the lineage of salvation! (1 Sam 19:11-18) David began a period of several years of running and hiding from Saul, establishing a home with two other wives in Ziklag in the land of the Philistines. (1 Sam 27:3-6)

During this time, Michal was taken back by Saul and given to Paltiel for his wife. The scripture does not tell us why Saul did this, but it may have been another political convenience, or a punishment for Michal. For whatever reason, it appears to have been a happy marriage for Paltiel, for when David

(Continued on page 14)

sent for Michal, Paltiel trailed along behind her crying! (2 Sam 3:15-16) David was using her for political leverage, putting Saul's house firmly and completely under his dominion. It is interesting, and perhaps revealing, that when David tells Abner to bring Michal to him, he calls her "*Saul's daughter*," rather than "*my wife*." (2 Sam 3:13) Then in messages to Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son, David calls Michal "*my wife*." (2 Sam 3:14). His rhetorical choices establish first who Michal is, and second that he is her ruler, as he would be ruler of all Israel, including the house of Saul. Nothing at all is mentioned of Michal's feeling or attitude at this time, but the depth and extent of her bitterness will soon be exhibited to all Israel.

The next time we see Michal is on a special day for the Israelite nation: the bringing of the Ark of God into the city of David where a special place was prepared for it. The Ark had been reclaimed from the Philistines and was now being restored to its proper place. 2 Samuel 6:5 says "*And David and all the house of Israel were making merrily before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.*" One, however did not share David's jubilation. Michal looked out the window to see David's celebration and "*. . . she despised him in her heart.*" 2 Sam 6:16 After placing the Ark in its place, sacrificing to the Lord, blessing the people and giving them food gifts David returned to bless his own home. Michal had not gone out to join the celebration, but she lost no time coming out to meet David with sarcastic mocking, "*. . . How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself before the eyes of*

his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" 2 Sam 6:20 Whether her reaction was borne of long resentment, jealousy, or pure hatred, she showed herself to be interested only in castigating David, charging him with exhibitionism and behaving dishonorably before his people. Hatred had so eaten into her that she was incapable of rejoicing before God, or of honoring her husband, her king, or her God. David's celebration was to the Lord and had nothing to do with his own honor. Jesus said, "*. . . What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*" Mt 15:18-19 Michal's bitterness erupted from her heart in searing words aimed at David.

The final words concerning Michal in the Bible are, "*And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.*" 2 Sam 6:23 This was a terrible blow to a woman in those days – think Hannah and Rachel. Whether it was a judgment from God, or whether David chose not to act as her husband again we don't know, but it is certainly not pleasing to God when a person chooses to react with harsh invective when he/she has experienced adversity

The apostle Paul suffered more hardship, betrayal, persecution, danger, trials than most people would be able to bear (2 Cor 11:23-27), yet he revealed in his letter to the Philippians how he dealt with it all: "*. . . forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" Phil 3:13-14 No bitterness there!

Lois and Eunice

Ephriam Davis

The names Lois and Eunice are specifically mentioned only once in the entire bible. On the surface and at first glance, some might assume that these women are insignificant bible characters to which we need not devote any effort of study, however that assumption is far from true.

*"I am reminded of your sincere **faith**, a **faith** that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."* 2Tim 1:5 (ESV)

From the immediate context above, the noted examples in both of these women are significant in the life of young Timothy and ultimately in the broader biblical context of his role in God's salvation plan for all of mankind. It illustrates the importance of **faith** being passed on to children through family relationships, which start in the home and include parental as well as grandparental influence.

*"Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Heb 11:1 (NKJV) *"But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* Heb 11:6 *"So then **faith** comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Rom 10:17

When the disciple Timothy is initially introduced, we learn that Eunice was Jewish, however his father was Greek. (Acts 16:1-3) Note only Eunice is identified here as a believer, and not his father. She, as well as Lois, had both obeyed the gospel. Therefore, they

would have also converted from Judaism, and possibly even before Timothy's birth. Lois and Eunice likely understood that circumcision was not required to obey the gospel and be saved, even though some Jews wrongly believed otherwise. (Acts 11:2-3, 15:1) Most likely, all of these circumstances collectively contributed to the reason why Timothy had not been previously circumcised on the 8th day after his birth per Jewish law and tradition. (Luke 1:59) However, Paul believed Timothy would be more effective preaching among the Jews if he were circumcised.

Since Timothy's father was not a believer, at least at this point in time, he could not and would not have brought Timothy *"...up in the training and admonition of the LORD."* Eph 6:4 This responsibility of household leadership was primarily the father's role, which was possibly a carryover from Jewish tradition.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deut 6:4-9

Paul supports that possibility later in this

(Continued on page 16)

same letter to Timothy, but it is clear that both Lois and Eunice fulfilled that role and taught God's word to Timothy. *"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through **faith** which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* 2Tim 3:14-17

The underlined phrases "Holy Scriptures" and "All Scripture" in the immediate context of the above passage are direct specific references to the Old Testament (OT). However, they are applicable to both the OT and New Testament (NT) in the general sense for all Christians today. Therefore, teaching children is a responsibility for any and all **faithful** and available parents as well as grandparents.

Finally, Timothy *"was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium."* due to the positive influences of both Lois and Eunice. His name occurs a total of 25 times throughout 12 NT books, including the 2 letters specifically penned by the apostle Paul directly addressing him as *"a true son in the **faith**"* and *"a beloved son."* (Acts 16:2, 1Tim 1:1-2, 2Tim 1: 1-2). All of this is evidence of how Lois and Eunice's positive influence carried over into Timothy's life so that *"the gospel...was preached to every creature under heaven..."* Col 1:1-2, 23

Esther **Karen Parks**

Esther was a young, beautiful, Jewish woman living in Persia. She was unknowingly thrust into one of the greatest stories of all time due to a very strange turn of events. Esther proved to be a woman of unusual wisdom and courage facing adversity and wickedness with confidence and grace. While God is not mentioned in this book, we see His hand and perfect timing in every turn of events.

Secrets of success from Esther's life:

Supporters Esther 2:7, 9

In the life of Queen Esther, we find that God had provided people who helped her and showed her favor. When she was a helpless orphan girl, her Uncle Mordecai came forward to adopt her. When she was at the palace, she found favor in the eyes of Hegai, who oversaw arrangements. Then finally she had favor in the eyes of the king, who chose her to be his next queen. To be successful, we need favor in the eyes of God and man. We need supporters who will stand with us and help us.

Submission Esther 2:10, 15, 20

Esther was an obedient and submissive person. She obeyed the instructions of Mordecai not to reveal her Jewish identity. This was not an isolated incident, but her way of life. She was always obedient to Mordecai when she lived in his household. When she was about to be presented before the king, she allowed Hegai to decide what she should wear. She respected the superior wisdom and experience of Hegai. We need to have

(Continued on page 17)

such a submissive and teachable spirit to be successful in life.

Sincerity Esther 2:22; 4:4-5

Esther was a sincere person with a true heart of love and gratitude. When Mordecai revealed a secret plot by some of the palace guards against the king, she passed along the information to the king, giving credit to Mordecai for saving the king's life. Esther was sincere in giving the credit to Mordecai. She didn't pretend as though she alone was responsible for giving this information to the king. Esther did not forget Mordecai once she became queen. She was still concerned about the welfare of Mordecai, who was the one who brought her up when she was a destitute orphan. When she heard that Mordecai was in mourning, she was greatly distressed and concerned enough to find out the reason. She did not ignore the sufferings of Mordecai. We need such a sincere and grateful heart and concerned love to be successful in our lives

Supplication Esther 4:16

Esther fasted for three days and called on her people to join her in the fast before she undertook her mission to save her people from destruction. She did not rush into action in pride and enthusiasm thinking she could do everything by her own strength. We need such humility and supplication to seek God's favor before we undertake tasks and endeavors in our lives.

Sacrifice Esther 4:11,16

Esther took a risk to save her people. She went to the presence of the king without being summoned, which could mean her

death. Without this willingness on her part to even sacrifice her own life to save her people, she wouldn't have succeeded in her mission. We need to have such willingness to sacrifice to be successful in our lives.

Strategy Esther 5:4,7

Esther had a strategy to accomplish her task. She used wisdom and planning. She did not rush to the king in an emotional outburst. She went about her task in a very methodical way by just inviting the king and the arch enemy Haman to dinner. It may have looked bad to give a dinner to her archenemy. Her people could have criticized and misunderstood her actions. Esther had a strategy and only after the second dinner did she reveal her requests. She did not accuse Haman directly, knowing he was close to the king. She first told the king about the danger to her life and the lives of her people. Only after the king demanded in fury to know who was responsible for this, did she reveal the name of Haman. We need such wisdom, and strategy and restraint and discretion to be successful in our lives.

Service Esther 8:5; 9:29; 10:3

Esther used her influence to help her people. She realized that the purpose of her elevation is to be useful to others and not just to enjoy her life in a selfish manner. Mordecai, her mentor also followed the same principle of using his influence to be a blessing to his people. Today the Lord wants to bless and promote those who have a desire to be a blessing. Their success today will benefit many others. This attitude will invoke the Lord's blessing in our lives bring success to our efforts.

Miriam

Mark Gray

When we think of women in the scriptures, they are typically as wives and/or mothers. Miriam's immediate family is never mentioned, however, she is often identified as Aaron's and Moses' sister. As such she takes an active role in protection, leadership, and praise.

Miriam became guardian and protector of her infant brother when she was probably still a child herself. As the familiar account goes, the Pharaoh of Egypt decreed all Hebrew male newborns were to be cast into the Nile. Moses was hidden until he was three months old, then his mother made a basket, waterproofed it and put her baby boy afloat on the Nile. Miriam follows at a distance as Pharaoh's daughter *"came down to bathe at the river."* Ex 2:4 and finds the baby. She takes pity on Moses despite knowing immediately that he is Hebrew. Miriam springs into action, asking the princess if she would like *"a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child."* Ex 2:7 Moses then is nursed by his own mother, and she is paid. There is no doubt in my mind that God fully arranged for Moses to be found and protected by the royal family. What I find amazing is how Miriam inserted herself into the scenario by boldly speaking to the princess and using her quick thinking to allow Moses to be nursed and nurtured by his own mother.

Miriam distinguishes herself as a leader immediately after the exodus and crossing of the Red Sea. The Israelites had just watched as the Egyptian chariots and soldiers were swept away into the sea. Moses sings a song

of praise and triumph. Similarly inspired, *"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.'"* Ex 15:20-21 The scene here depicts a woman who is admired enough that when she grabs a tambourine and heads out, the other women take notice and follow suit. Miriam sings a song of praise to God Almighty after they all witness a miracle. This is not a secondary incident to Moses' song. This is Miriam's recognition of the power of God who has liberated them from bondage and she leads the women in spontaneous worship. She does not usurp Moses' leadership but "goes out" so that these women can join together in their own joyous praise.

Up to this point we have looked at the positive high points about Miriam. Much like Moses, Aaron, David, and others, the LORD has seen fit to show us some negative aspects of those devoted to Him. *"Miriam and Aaron spoke out against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, ... and they said, 'Has the LORD indeed only spoken through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?' And the LORD heard it. ... the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting.' And the three of them came out. And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud... and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. And he said, 'If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision...in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. ...With him I speak*

mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak out against my servant Moses?’ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow.” Num 12:1-10 Miriam is identified in the book of Exodus as a prophetess; chosen by God to receive visions and dreams as He declared to her. Perhaps this is the reason she may have considered herself equivalent to Moses (her baby brother) and felt justified in questioning his marriage to a Cushite. God, however, revealed that Moses was a special prophet who was able to behold God and converse with Him. Her punishment of leprosy was swift and immediate. Aaron pleads to Moses who in turn “cried to the LORD, ‘O God, please heal her – please.’” Num 12:13 After seven days outside of camp she was healed and brought back into fellowship with the Israelites. This, I believe, is an important lesson for us all about humility. I tend to think that Miriam was the “ringleader” of this rebellion because she alone was punished with leprosy (although Aaron received the verbal chastisement, as well as she). Our place is to do God’s will and be content with that. Ambition for the sake of adoration, or status, or position is not what God desires.

Miriam is a wonderful example of a feminine leader and is recognized by God Himself: “I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” Mic 6:4 She was a “self-starter” and quick thinker. She was a prophetess who inspired others to follow and praise the LORD. Like us, she was not perfect.

Jehoshabeath

Olivia Zeigler

In the Old Testament, 2 Kings 11:1-3, and in the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 22:10-12, there is the brief story about a woman named Jehosheba or Jehoshabeath. Many people have never heard of or know very little about this character because her story in God’s word is short. However, her presence in the Bible is there for a purpose, and she is a good example for Christians to follow.

Leading up to Jehoshabeath’s story, Jehu has just been appointed king over Israel by Elisha’s servant (2 Kings 9:6), and he has been ordered by this servant to strike down previous King Ahab’s (wicked King of Israel) descendants (2 Kings 9:7-8; 2 Chronicles 22:7). Ahab was known for the many wicked things he did, such as worshiping false gods and his involvement in the murders of many servants of the Lord. Therefore, God was going to use Jehu to stop Ahab’s descendants from continuing those evil acts. Jehu listens to Elisha and heads on his way to complete the task given to him (2 Kings 9:14). Jehu starts by going to find Joram (son of Ahab), and when he finds Joram he also comes across a man named Ahaziah, who is the King of Judah (2 Kings 9:21). Ahaziah was also a wicked King because he was advised by his mother Athaliah, who was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Jehu, as ordered, shoots with an arrow and kills Joram (2 Kings 9:24), then Ahaziah tries to flee after seeing this, but he is shot and killed as well (2 Kings 9: 27-28; 2 Chronicles 22:9). Soon after, Ahaziah’s mother, Athaliah, discovers

(Continued on page 20)
Page 19

that her son has been killed and she becomes very upset. Athaliah plans to eliminate the remaining royal family, her own grandchildren, and claim the throne of Judah for herself (2 Kings 11:1; 2 Chronicles 22:10).

This brings us to the introduction of Jehoshabea (also known as Jehoshabeath), our character of focus for this article. Jehoshabeath was the sister of Ahaziah and the daughter of Jehoram and Athaliah, King and Queen of Judah. (2 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 22:11). When Jehoshabeath heard that her mother was killing the rest of the royal family, she was probably very scared, and she wanted to do something to prevent Athaliah from killing the grandchildren. Immediately, Jehoshabeath took Joash, Ahaziah's son, and courageously hid him and his nurse in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 11). Joash and his nurse continued to hide from Athaliah in the house of God for six years while she usurped the throne in Judah (2 Kings 11:3; 2 Chronicles 22:12), and eventually, Joash became king when he was seven years old.

Jehoshabeath's story is only two verses long in 2 Kings and two verses long in 2 Chronicles. However, in her short story she displays great qualities that we should strive to have, such as humility and courage. In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul reminds us of the importance of being humble and selfless. To have this mindset, we must always be willing to put others' needs before oneself and show everyone love just as Jesus did. When we portray humility and selflessness, we strengthen our love and become more like Jesus. Jehoshabeath embodied this de-

scription when putting Joash and his nurse's safety before her own. She knew that Athaliah planned to eliminate the remaining royal family, which meant Jehoshabeath could have been in danger too, since she was Jehoram's daughter. Instead of thinking only of herself and getting herself to safety first, she goes to get Joash and his nurse first. Jehoshabeath then chooses to hide Joash and his nurse in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 11:2) - an important detail that should not be overlooked. At this time in history, the people would go to the temple to worship or give their offerings to God. This was a place where they would be in the presence of God and be comforted by His presence, just as how assembling with our church family is for us today. In 2 Thessalonians 3:3, the Bible reveals how the Lord is the ultimate protector. God promises to watch over us and guard us against all evil that comes our way. When Jehoshabeath learned what Athaliah was doing, she was probably worried for herself and Joash, but I believe she took much comfort in knowing that God would protect them and the house of God would be the best place for them to hide and be safe.

Jehoshabeath's story has an important place in God's plan of the ages, and her actions can have a big impact on Christians even though she is only talked about in a total of 4 verses in the Bible. We can read God's word and learn from Jehoshabeath as she teaches us a lesson on trusting in the Lord's protection. She is an example of humility and strength, and we can strive to have these same qualities as we live our lives in God's service.