

Uncommon Women of the Bible

A mini-Bible study that shines a light on lesser-studied passages of Scripture, revealing their meaning, relevance, and application for believers today.

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Greetings Pastor!

Thank you for visiting my Expo Booth at the Leading Well in a Small Church Conference! I pray the conference was a blessing to you!

Here's your freebie from my booth: a mini-bible study entitled "Uncommon Women of the Bible." Feel free to share it with your congregation or small groups; I believe it's a great starting point for deeper study into God's Word.

Let's stay in touch!

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Abigail: A Husband's Covering

1 Samuel 25 (NIV)

The story of Abigail is one of a woman who, despite her husband's behavior, was a protector of her family and a covering for her husband. Her husband Nabal was of the house of Caleb, so he was an Israelite. The passage from 1 Samuel 25 says that although he was wealthy and did well in business, he was harsh and evil and did not follow the Mosaic laws in conducting his affairs fairly.

There was a time when David took care of Nabal's shepherds when they were on David's land. Later, David sent some of his men to work in the area where Nabal lived and told them to ask Nabal to extend hospitality to them, just as David had done for him. Showing hospitality was an important part of Jewish society, so David probably did not anticipate an issue with his request.

However, things played out very differently! Instead of being kind and welcoming to David's men, Nabal was rude, disrespectful and sent David's men away with nothing. They reported to David what happened, and David was ready to kill Nabal (literally).

Abigail, Nabal's wife, received news about what happened and immediately went into action! Verse 3 of 1 Samuel 25 says that she was intelligent, and her intellect would move her to act on behalf of her husband, herself and the rest of their household. The NLT version of verse 18 says that Abigail "wasted no time" in trying to make the situation right!! She prepared a very generous meal as a peace offering and sent it in David's direction; she would follow shortly behind. She arrived where David and his men were and began to beg his forgiveness for the actions of her husband (note: Abigail did nothing wrong) David accepted her word and her offering and decided not to kill Nabal and destroy everything he owned (that would also include Abigail!) God would later punish Nabal, who would be struck down and die about 10 days later.

Abigail was married to a fool; in fact, his name means 'fool!' But despite her difficult marital situation, she was an upright woman and did what was pleasing in God's sight. Her intellect, obedience and calm demeanor would pay off...not only would Nabal's household be spared the wrath of David, but when Nabal died, she would become a wife of David, who would soon become the King of Israel.

Application

We may find ourselves in a difficult situation, where we must deal with people who are harsh, mean or evil. Rather than fall into their same pattern of behavior, as believers we should follow God's standard. It means that we are to "repay no one evil for evil," and are to "have regard for good things in the sight of all men." (Romans: 12:17, NKJV). And when we see that someone with whom we are connected has wronged another, we may be called upon to make things right, even if we had nothing to do with the error. Our actions can cover the missteps of the person we care about, stand in the gap for them, and in the process, also benefit us!

Questions for Reflection:

- Have you ever had to stand in the gap on behalf of someone who acted foolishly? What was the outcome?
- How can Abigail's story help you 'take the high road' when necessary?

The Canaanite Woman: Relentless Pursuit

Matthew 15:21-28

The story of the Canaanite woman is one that illustrates a relentless pursuit of a goal, need or desire, despite perceived obstacles such as cultural and religious differences. In this passage, Jesus was around Tyre and Sidon, which is in the Phoenician region. They were ancient cities, whose beginnings go back to the time before the Israelites entered Canaan (the Promised Land). Residents of this region were not followers of Jehovah, but instead worshiped Baal.

The Canaanite woman, also known as the Syro-Phoenician woman, came to Jesus and cried out to Him, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Her need was great...her daughter was demon-possessed, and she desired that her daughter experience freedom and deliverance.

Even though she was not a Jew, she acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Son of David (verse 22). Jesus’ reputation must have preceded him, even among pagans! To this mother whose daughter was suffering, it didn't matter what religious or cultural differences existed between her and Jesus – she knew she needed Him. Not only did she cry out to Jesus, but she also cried out to the disciples...anyone who would hear her! Even though the disciples wanted Jesus to send her away, she was relentless in her pursuit of Jesus for her daughter’s healing.

After not responding to her initially, Jesus reminds her that he was “sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” Based on her ethnicity, she was not in that group, so Jesus seemingly pushed back on her request. But this mother was determined! In response to His statement, she cried out again to Him; she wasn’t going down without a fight! He spoke to her again, telling her (or reminding her) that his first mission was to the Jews so they would believe that He was their Messiah. Jesus used the word “dog” in verse 26 not to belittle the woman; the word reflects the Jews’ view of the Gentiles in this society. The woman agrees with Jesus’s statement about his first mission to the Jews but counters his argument and says that “even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” (verse 27). In other words, “your first mission may be to another group of people, but I too, want to partake in this mission somehow...and I’ll take whatever is left. Just heal my daughter!” Do you see the relentlessness in this woman? She recognizes her place and doesn’t let it stop her from going after what she wants!

Jesus tells the Canaanite woman that she has “great faith,” and heals her daughter that very hour (verse 28).

Application

What can we learn from the Syro-Phoenician woman? Don’t give up! As believers, we know that when we have a need, the source to fulfill that need is Jesus. Be relentless in your pursuit of

what you know God can provide, based on His word. If you need healing, the word says, “that by His stripes, we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5, NKJV). If you need provision, the word says that “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NKJV). If you need peace, the word says “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27 NKJV)

Exercise your faith and be relentless today! Pursue God, not just to meet your needs, but to also grow your relationship with Him. And watch what He does in your life!

Questions for Reflection

- What need do you have today?
- How can you be relentless in your pursuit of God today?

Daughters of Zelophehad: Family Advocates
Number 27:1-10 (NKJV)

We are introduced to these five sisters -- Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah -- in Numbers 27. While their story may not be as well-known as other women in the Bible, we can learn much from them!

These women were the daughters of Zelophehad, who belonged to the tribe of Manassas. Their father was deceased and died without sons. According to the Mosaic law, their father's property would revert to other male heirs if there was no son to inherit it. They recognized that they would need something that would be a source of provision for them and decided to appeal to Moses for their father's land.

Moses sought the Lord for guidance, and God agreed with the sisters! Look at how God responds to Moses:

“The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.” (vs 7)

In addition, God gives Moses additional instructions that address a gap in the laws of inheritance when a man did not have any sons:

“And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.’” And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the Lord commanded Moses.” (vs 8-10)

God would instruct Moses to update the law!

Later in the book of Numbers (chapter 36), the sisters are instructed to marry within their tribe so that the land will remain within the tribe. They comply with this request.

These sisters advocated for themselves as well as their future generations! The women had enough insight and foresight to recognize a gap in the law of inheritance and suggested a way to resolve their unusual case. They were forward thinkers! As they realized what would happen to them and their land under the existing laws, they worked within the Mosaic system to approach

Moses about a resolution. I would imagine that since these women worshiped Jehovah, they probably consulted God about how to proceed. Their cause was a worthy one: to ensure their families were taken care of, both now and for future generations. And they needed to get out of their comfort zones and work within a system that wasn't always favorable toward women to accomplish their goal.

Application

Sometimes, advocacy isn't easy. Can you imagine what people may have said about the daughters of Zelophehad? Folks may have argued against their right to receive their father's inheritance and their challenge of the Mosaic law. We can use these women as an example of standing up for what is right, even if existing laws do not support doing the right thing. While something may be legal, it may not be ethical or in someone's best interest. Being an advocate means to publicly support a cause that can benefit those in need; and sometimes, we may have to go against conventional wisdom and get out of our comfort zones to do the right thing.

Questions for Reflection:

- What can you do to ensure your children receive an inheritance that they can pass on to their future generations?
- In what ways do you need to advocate for your family?

Dorcas: A Woman of Impactful Service

Acts 9:36-41 (NASB)

Have you ever met a woman who is kind, loving and charitable? A woman who operates in excellence? We may all possess these characteristics to some degree, but I'm talking about someone who goes above and beyond the norm to be kind, loving and charitable to others. In Acts 9, that person was Dorcas (also known by her Aramaic name Tabitha), a person who lived in the region of Joppa. According to scripture, she "was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did habitually." (Acts 9:36). In fact, she was called a female disciple, making a memorable impact within the Body of Christ.

Unfortunately, something would happen that would rock the believers in Joppa. Dorcas, their kind and loving sister, their fellow believer who was diligently working to serve others, became sick and died! What a blow this must have been to the community! While some washed her body and prepared it for burial, two other disciples decided to find Peter, who they heard in the area. They asked Peter to come quickly to address their situation. Peter arrived, prayed over Dorcas' body and said "Tabitha, arise." And she arose!

We know that God is a miracle-working God, Who can even raise people from the dead. And Peter, by the power of God, did just that for Dorcas. What can we learn from Dorcas's life story?

Dorcas' impact on the ministry at Joppa was invaluable! She used the unique gifts and talents that God had given her to be a blessing to others. When Peter arrived in Joppa, the widows wept and showed him all the special garments that Dorcas had made. These garments seemed to be more than just clothing...they must have held such special significance that the believers in Joppa knew something must be done to bring Dorcas back to them!

Application

We can use Dorcas as an example of an effective servant, someone who "excelled in acts of kindness and charity," and performed them not just periodically, but all the time! It was a part of who she was! We can use Dorcas as an example of what a female disciple looks like. Just like Dorcas, we serve, not for recognition or for the approval of others, but so we can be a blessing to the Body of Christ

Questions for Reflection

- What kind of impact is your service in the Kingdom of God having?
- At the end of your life, what will people say about your works on earth?
- At the end of your life, what will God say about your works on earth?

Mary, Joanna, and Susanna: Grateful Followers

Luke 8:1-3 (NIV)

Throughout Jesus's ministry, there were many other people (besides the 12 apostles) who were faithful followers and disciples. In Luke 8, we see Jesus and the Twelve moving from one town or village to another "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God." (verse 1). In addition to them, there were some women "who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases." (verse 2). These were women who had experienced Jesus' power first-hand; He delivered them from evil spirits and diseases and freed them from physical, mental and emotional bondage! We can only imagine what their lives must have been like prior to their encounter with Jesus and how grateful they were for their healing and deliverance!

These three women are only mentioned briefly in scripture, but what we can glean from their lives is powerful. After their healing, they decided to become followers of Christ. They were not just casual follower -- they accompanied Jesus as He spread the gospel message! How many of us are willing to leave the comforts of our homes to physically follow someone? In our modern society, we can follow someone on social or other media without even meeting them. But to be a part of Jesus' ministry, they had to sacrifice what they knew. To show their gratitude for what Jesus had done for them, they were willing to help him spread the gospel, no matter what it took!

Not only did they become followers of Jesus, these three women also gave of their finances (verse 3 says "out of their own means") to support the ministry! Whether they were wealthy or not is immaterial; what matters is that they chose to give their resources to support this ministry they felt so strongly about.

Application

These women sacrificed time, resources and comfort because of their gratitude! They were thankful to Jesus for their restoration and in appreciation, decided to be "all in" for Jesus! We, too, should be 'all in' for Jesus, not only because of Who He is, but because of what He's done for us...dying on the cross for our sins and giving us the opportunity to experience eternal life!

Questions for Reflection

- As you reflect on your life, how has God delivered you?
- In what ways are you showing appreciation and gratitude for what God has done for you?
- Are you "all in" for Jesus?