

#bmcjubileeyear

Small Group Booklet - August 2016

COURAGEOUS WOMEN

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Loosely based on the book: Jesus and courageous woman – Elsa Tamez

South Africa celebrates the contribution of women in our lives during the month of August. We will spend the four weeks of August honouring our women. This includes both those who are recognised heroes, and also those who are un-named and not acknowledged for their contributions to society. Many women love, struggle, resist, heal and teach today making a difference where they are, despite unfair laws, oppression and discrimination against them. We will discover that Jesus has a special love for people that are marginalized and discriminated against. In particular we will see that Jesus treats everybody as equally loved, precious and valued. His example challenges us in the way we see women in our society.



While South African law historically played a significant role in our prejudices, the introduction of the bill of rights in our constitution (effective in 1997) finally recognized women as equal citizens who can vote, own property and have guardianship with regards to children. Sadly, many women are still not seen as economic equals, and so earn less than men doing the same job.

Even the Methodist Church has not been exempt from this prejudice. Women are not adequately represented in the leadership structures, despite the fact that most of the congregants are woman.

*“Rev **Constance Oosthuizen** was the first ordained woman accepted in ministry in 1976. Rev **Nikiwe Mavis Mbilinis** was the first black women to be ordained in the MCSA in 1985. They faced many challenges as they were relegated to run Sunday Schools and discriminated against in a very patriarchal society.” (Article: “The place of women ministers in the mission of the Methodist Church of SA” by Fanie S.Mkhwanazi and Tias Kgatla).*

We are very fortunate and blessed to have two very special ladies to represent women in the BMC congregation: Rev. Dalene Jordaan and Rev. Nokulunga Songca. They share a passionate love for God and his people. They are excited about transformation and they are determined and equipped to support equal rights for woman and other disadvantaged groups in this church, city and country.

Women are active participants in the “Good News” story of the Bible. Some of them are named like: Abigail (1 Samuel 5:32-33), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), Deborah (Judges 5), Esther, Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) and Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 4:13-17). Many have a story,



but no names. They are the “un-named” woman who are either associated with well-known men or events that left their imprint in history. When the Bible was written, women were severely marginalized, so the fact that they are mentioned at all is significant. We will look at four women and their stories and you will see that although they are un-named they are remembered as trail-blazers for freedom of thought and action. These were courageous

women whose lives changed when they met Jesus. We hope to connect their stories with the stories of some South African women who have helped to change world views and perceptions of woman. We hope that you will find courage in their faith and learn that each one of us can make a difference where we are. **In fact we were born for it!**

Blessings

Pete Grassow & Nadja Atkinson



We would like to celebrate and support the woman in this country and in our congregation by wearing the “Thursdays in Black” button for the month of August (see <http://www.thursdaysinblack.co.za/about>). Each congregant should receive a button with their bulletin at the Sunday services.

By supporting 'Thursdays in Black' I stand;

- *In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form.*
- *In solidarity with 1 in 4 women worldwide who face violence in their lives.*
- *In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence.*
- *For awareness and information about the challenges of gender based violence.*
- *In the hope that a different reality is possible.*

By making this pledge I undertake to stand up and make a difference in the world where I live, work and play.

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WEEK 1: WOMEN AND THE LAW

Generally accepted laws can be cruel

READ: JOHN 8:1-12



The woman who was not stoned.

Jewish law permitted a husband to kill his wife if she was caught in the act of adultery. Both parties involved would be put to death by stoning (Leviticus 20:10). This act of infidelity was also understood as disrespecting the private property of the man – in this case the property was a woman. This story tells us that the woman was brought to Jesus alone. It tells us nothing about the woman herself. She is not named. We ask ourselves if she was judged fairly – it is entirely possible that a man could get rid of a troublesome wife by claiming adultery took place. One needs to pause and ask about the other offending party. Why was there no guilty male produced at this public trial? She knew she was going to be punished if found guilty of adultery. Even if she didn't get the death penalty her life would be ruined as her reputation had been destroyed. The Pharisees put great pressure on Jesus to go along with the crowd and condemn this woman. They regarded themselves as the custodians of public morality and treated all sinners with contempt. But as the mob brings the guilty woman to Jesus, he does not join the chorus of condemnation; instead he says *"if any one of you is without sin, let them be the first to throw a stone at her"*. (John 8:7). With this statement he holds up a mirror to them that makes them ask questions about their own sinful lives. At the same time Jesus also empowers her. He gives her a promise (*I do not condemn you*) and a commission (*go and sin no more*). This is not what she expected! She walks off and we never hear of her again, but we can be sure of one thing: she saw Jesus (His mercy and forgiveness) and He saw her (a person to be loved not someone's property). No-one is without sin! Jesus continually holds up the mirror to our lives: do we like what we see? And just as we admit that we are guilty, we are again amazed at his forgiveness, grace, mercy and encouragement.

Charlotte Maxeke was born on the 7th of April 1874, in the Polokwane District, South Africa. Her faith in Jesus led her to challenge the oppressive laws of society and to advocate on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Charlotte and her sister joined the African Jubilee Choir in 1891, which gave them the opportunity to tour England and the USA. Charlotte stayed in the USA and studied for a BSc degree at Wilberforce University of Cleveland (Ohio), where she met her husband Marshall Maxeke. They returned to South Africa in 1901. She was one of South Africa's first Black woman graduates. She used her education to initiate and teach at various schools on the Witwatersrand and in the Transkei. Her Christian faith led her to be part of the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC). She was elected as president of the Woman's Missionary Society and actively looked after the welfare of Africans (she set up an employment agency for Africans in Johannesburg). She was also the first black woman to become a parole officer for juvenile delinquents. Her faith also had a political component: Charlotte founded the "Bantu Woman's League" that later became part of the "African National Congress Women's League". She helped organize the anti-pass movement in Bloemfontein in 1913, and participated in the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in 1920. She is often referred to as the "Mother of Black Freedom" in South Africa. Her name has been given to the former "Johannesburg General Hospital", which is now known as "Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital". The South African Navy submarine "SAS Charlotte Maxeke" was also named after her.



What can we learn from these two extraordinary women?

We need to take a stand for good in society: it is said that "If you stand for nothing you fall for everything". The point is neither to get rid of all laws nor to just blindly obey all laws. We need to test the law against the teachings of Jesus. Once we understand what is its purpose, our duty is to uphold the laws that protect society, and fight those laws that discriminate - even if they are generally accepted laws in society. We are placed in our world to make a difference, to stand up for those oppressed. It is impossible to do it alone: we need God's wisdom and discernment to help us see right from wrong and to enable transformation with compassion and not with hatred and violence.



1. Which discriminatory law has had the most impact on your life? Why?
2. Is there inequality in your workplace? What if anything, can you do about it?
3. Have you ever been caught "red-handed" doing something you shouldn't have been doing? What were the consequences?
4. Where have you been judge and jury in someone's life? What were the consequences?

5. Do you think you hold a mirror up to others in a compassionate way? How can you change what you say that it becomes more compassionate?

Pray for each other, the Church and South Africa.

DAILY DEVOTION



Sunday: John 8:1-12
Monday: Matthew 7:13
Tuesday: 2 Peter 2:7-9
Wednesday: Acts 11:2-18
Thursday: 2 Chronicles 31:20-21
Friday: Exodus 23:1-3
Saturday: Matthew 7:11-12

WEEK 2: WOMEN WHO FACE OPPRESSION

One cannot change oppressive systems in secret

READ: MARK 5:21-43



The woman who stole a miracle from Jesus.

The woman who touched Jesus' hem had chronic bleeding and had lived with this condition for a very long time. She had tried everything in her power to find healing but instead it only got worse. It wasn't just the physical aspect of her illness that was getting her down; socially she was an outcast as well. She lived in a society that had strict social norms: all behavior was classified as pure or impure. Sick people, women in their menstrual cycle, and most especially such a sick, bleeding woman, would be impure. Such people were separated from general society and shunned. Not only did she live a lonely life, but she was condemned as sinful as well, as it was believed that sickness and illness were caused by sin. But this woman believed that if she touched Jesus's garment she would be healed. This was risky for her to do. What if one of the people recognized her? But she was out of money, friends, and solutions. There was no guarantee that touching Jesus would work, but she believed that God would heal her. And He did! Jesus risked public exclusion by calling attention to his being touched by a sick

women. Instead of this making him unclean – it restored her to dignity. He challenged their cultural beliefs on what is unclean. She took a risk, but was richly rewarded when Jesus reinstated her into society. He called her “daughter” - she was made whole again!



Nontsikelelo Thethiwe Albertina Sisulu - often referred to as the '*Mother of the Nation*' - was a political activist and nurse, and one of the most important leaders of anti-Apartheid resistance in South Africa. Born in the village of Camama, Transkei, on 21 October 1918, Albertina committed her life to God within the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1939 was accepted as a trainee nurse at Johannesburg General, a 'non-European' hospital. In

1944 Albertina qualified as a nurse and, on the 15th of July, married Walter Sisulu. They were married for 59 years, until he died in his wife's arms in May 2003 at the age of 90. Albertina was shocked at the way junior White nurses would order Black sisters around. Six months into her training she witnessed racial discrimination against black patients who were refused admission into the empty “white” section of the hospital after a horrific accident at Park Station. The injured black patients were forced to lie on the floor of the overcrowded “black” section. This was the beginning of Albertina's life as a political activist in her own right. She joined the African National Congress (ANC) Women’s League in 1955, and took part in the launch of the Freedom Charter the same year. Albertina was the only woman present at the birth of the ANC Youth League. She became a member of the executive of the Federation of South African Women in 1954 and on 9 August 1956 she joined the protest march of 20,000 women to the Union Buildings of Pretoria. The day is celebrated in South Africa as **National Women's Day**. She spent three weeks in jail before being acquitted on pass charges, with Nelson Mandela as her lawyer. For the next 30 years she provided much needed leadership when most of the ANC's high command was either in prison or in exile. She is remembered for her insistence that "Women are the people who are going to relieve us from all this oppression and depression”.

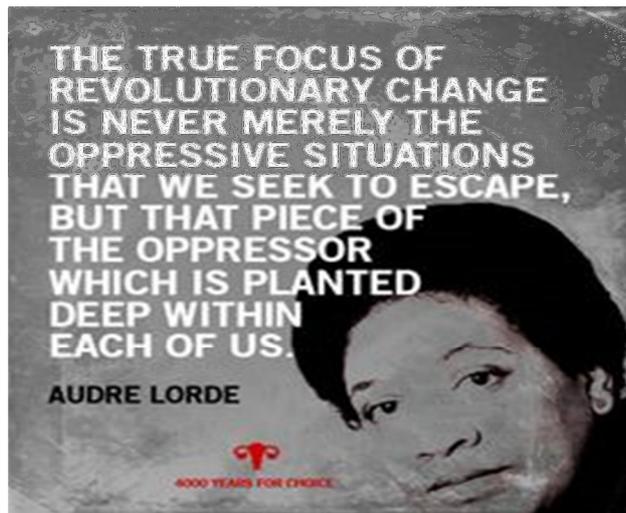
What can we learn from these two extraordinary women?

Some belief systems are accepted by society even though they are very destructive. Beliefs that see people as unclean because of illness, or inferior because of the colour of their skin, are deeply entrenched, and changing such ideas takes time. It takes courage and determination to continue to fight wrong perceptions. Acting boldly with stubborn persistence wins the race! We draw on our faith in Jesus to persevere until there is change. This is where we will find dignity and become whole. Many women today still struggle with cultural and social systems that oppress them. For example: there are women who are paid less than men for doing the same work – simply because they are women. Or there are women whose opinion is dismissed in the presence of a male motor mechanic, or a male electrician – simply because they are a woman. Healing begins when women who reach out and touch the hem of the garment of Jesus, make themselves visible in society: when we reach out, we take the next step.

SMALL GROUPS



1. Please share with the group when you took a step in faith. What did you do and how did God respond?
2. Many people passed and touched Jesus. Why did Jesus' power affect this woman and not others?
3. In what way can you identify with this woman?
4. Discuss this statement: The true focus...



*Pray for women who need to stand strong in faith
(some being oppressed by the people closest to them)*

DAILY DEVOTION

Sunday:	Mark 5:21-43
Monday:	Psalms 6:9
Tuesday:	Romans 15:7
Wednesday:	Ephesians 4:20-25
Thursday:	Proverbs 28:1
Friday:	1 John 5:14-15
Saturday:	Proverbs 3:5-



WEEK 3: WOMEN WHO RESIST

Stubborn determination can change rules & attitudes

READ: MARK 7:24-30, MATTHEW 15:21-29



The woman who argued with Jesus

This woman knew when she spoke to Jesus that Jews look down on Gentiles. They were seen as unclean and irreligious. Humiliated and looked down upon, this woman did not give up; she persisted in trying to get Jesus' attention. She had heard of his miracles and compassion, and driven by her love for her ill daughter, she knelt at Jesus' feet in humility asking Him to heal her daughter. She was willing to beg to get Jesus' blessing for her

daughter. She, a Syrophenician by birth, was a religious outcast who believed that Jesus could heal her daughter. Until this point in history Jesus dedicated his life to the people of Israel (Matthew 15:24). Jesus refuses her three times, but she persists and argues her point intelligently, using his analogy. Her faith and determination lead Jesus to change his mind and to show compassion. This made it possible for others who weren't Jews to benefit from his transformational powers. This lady was the first advocate for the Gentiles! Jesus didn't demand that she become Jewish (follow the law) in order for her daughter to be healed, she only had to show her faith in Him. As she believed that even the crumbs from his table would be enough – He healed her daughter.



Thulisile Nomkhosi "Thuli" Madonsela was born on 28 September 1962 in Johannesburg. An Advocate, Thuli Madonsela has been South Africa's Public Protector since 2009. She is an ANC member, has worked for trade unions since the 1980's and was part of the team that drafted the final constitution in 1996. Since she has become the Public Protector she has overcome many obstacles and extreme resistance from very powerful sources: politicians and other public figures have publically undermined her and her office. She has had criminal charges laid against her and her life has been threatened. Yet she stands fast with immense integrity protecting what she believes is right. She credits her strength to her Christian faith: *"my Christian faith informs my commitment to values such as truth, integrity, fairness, compassion and a balancing of justice and mercy in my work"*. She has a calm professional way about her, never giving up in what she believes to be the truth. One of her most significant victories was when the Constitutional Court ruled

**When you know
the truth is on
your side, don't
ever worry.
Simply make
friends with time.**

Thuli Madonsela

that President Zuma and the National Assembly failed to uphold the country's constitution. She has received various awards over the years and has many published articles. She will be remembered as the woman who never backed down!

What can we learn from these two extraordinary women?

Woman with faith in God have power: they can change entrenched beliefs and traditions. We need to be defiant, head-strong and daring when we strive for the good of others. We can start by looking at rules objectively. Just because it has "always" been done a certain way does not make it right. Is it fair, just and does it promote the love of God? We need to be led by faith, and not by tradition. We needn't impress God with how good we are, but rather need to confess and live a life that show how great God is. We do this by fighting on behalf of those who aren't strong enough, do not have the resources, or cannot do it for themselves.



1. Have you ever felt desperate before? What did you do and what were the consequences?
2. Why is it easier for us to help others when they are helpless and not ourselves? Please share.
3. What reasons could the women have had to be fearful in approaching Jesus? What are your reasons for not changing a belief, behaviour, or attitude? Can you see a way to change that?
4. Where in your life has "stubborn determination" paid off? Explain.
5. What is the main message that you take from this story today?

Pray for women who have to resist and stand firm in pursuing what is right!



Sunday:	Matthew 15:21-28
Monday:	Acts 15:5-11
Tuesday:	Proverbs 31:26
Wednesday:	Galatians 2:16
Thursday:	Mark 12:29-31
Friday:	1 Samuel 15:22
Saturday:	Psalms 51:17



WEEK 4: WOMEN WHO TEACH

Knowing your worth can change others' lives

READ: JOHN 4:5-42



The woman who became a Missionary

Jesus was traveling through Samaria, which was a region in conflict with Judea. The Jews looked down on Samaritans and avoided them whenever possible as they were deemed to have mixed blood and a corrupted faith. Jesus stopped at Jacob's well as he was tired and needed a drink. A Samaritan woman came to draw water. The fact that she does this in the heat of midday – when no other people would

come to the well – meant that she was an outcast. Jesus breaks with convention by asking her for a drink. No respectable Jewish man would (1.) talk to a Samaritan, (2.) a woman and (3.) do it in a public place. Jesus ignored all the prescribed social norms and expectations. Not only does He associate with her in public, He sees her for who she really is: someone whose soul is in search of refreshment. Jesus looks past her reputation and offers her the gift of “living water”. It took her a while to realise who Jesus was and what he was offering her. She realizes that while Jesus will not take away the challenges she faces, He will change her from the inside: Jesus will empower her to deal with her life. Suddenly the insignificance of her life is swallowed by the significance of Jesus. He exposes her sin and offers her forgiveness and a new life. Once she gets what an immense gift she has been given – she can't keep quiet. She immediately shares her experience with others. Despite her reputation as a sinful woman, people came out to listen to Jesus. This “sinful” Samaritan woman became the first Missionary for Jesus!

Emily Hobhouse was born on the 9th of April 1860 in Cornwall, England. Her selfless and courageous actions exposed the inhumanity of concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902). The daughter of an Anglican priest, her Christian compassion led her to a life spent caring for the outcasts, first amongst Cornish miners in the American town of Minnesota, and then in South Africa. When the war between Britain and South Africa broke out in October 1899, she got permission from the British government to start the Distress Fund for South African Women and Children. She sailed for the Cape in December 1900 to supervise the distribution of funds. *“I came*



quite naturally, in obedience to the feeling of unity or oneness of womanhood ... it is when the community is shaken to its foundations, that abysmal depths of privation call to each other and that a deeper unity of humanity evinces itself”

When she arrived she was shocked: the camps were overcrowded, unhygienic, and had few resources. In the 18 months of concentration camps over 26 000 woman and children died, of which 24 000 were under the age of 16yrs. She struggled to get them more resources but the authorities did not listen to her pleas. When informed by the Administrator of the Orange River Colony that she showed "too much personal sympathy", Emily replied: "*That was the precise reason why I came out – to show personal sympathy and to render assistance in cases of personal afflictions.*" She decided to go back to England so as to persuade the Government as well as the public to help her. However, she was severely criticized by the English Government for working against the establishment. Emily found herself an outcast with no social standing. She didn't let that get her down and continued with her mission to ask for funding. As a result of her report and continued efforts the government relented and an official investigation was launched to inspect the camps. The Fawcett Commission found them as barbaric as she had described. Emily tried to come back to SA in 1901, but was deported with no specific reason and lived in France until the war ended. She managed to visit SA in 1903 and in 1905, when she set up Boer home industries to teach young woman spinning and weaving. Emily was also concerned about people of Indian origin in South Africa, and was upset that the Boers suppressed them. She had expected the Boers to act differently after they had fought for their own freedom. She assisted Gandhi when he needed it in 1913. There is both a town in the Free State and a residence at the University of the Free State named after her. She is also remembered with a statue in her home church in Cornwall. In 1990 Dirk de Villiers directed the South African film *That Englishwoman: An Account of the Life of Emily Hobhouse* with Veronica Lang as Emily. She persisted against strong opposition to do what she believed was the right thing to do.

What can we learn from these two extraordinary women?

Jesus did not come to take away our challenges – he changes us on the inside and empowers us to face what we need to deal with. Even when we feel like outcasts, or strangers, Jesus welcomes us with “streams of living water”. This is our witness opportunity: changed we become God’s hands and feet in this world. We need to know who we are in Christ and live intimately with God so that we can fulfil our purpose on earth. The gospel is for everyone no matter your race, social position, gender..... or sins. We need to share this special eternal gift we have received; we need to speak to strangers and care for the rejected offering them living water so that they will never be thirsty again!



1. What do you think made the woman realise she was talking to the Messiah? Why?
2. Do you have any doubts or misgivings about Jesus that are hindering your faith? Please share.

3. What are you thirsting for at the moment:

- Close friendships
- Closeness with God
- Acceptance of who you are
- Forgiveness
- Meaning and purpose in life
- Others....



4. Please share what you think you need to revive your thirst? Have you asked God to help you with it? **Spend some time in prayer.**

5. How do you know someone wants to talk about God/their faith? And which ways have you used to approach the subject that has proven to be successful?



Sunday:	John 4:5-42
Monday:	Matthew 5:14-16
Tuesday:	Romans 1:16-17
Wednesday:	Psalm 89:1-2
Thursday:	1 Corinthians 1:8-9
Friday:	Matthew 24:14
Saturday:	Psalm 18:30-31



RESOURCES:

- ARTICLE: The place of women ministers in the mission of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Fanie S.Mkhwanazi & Tias Kgatla (2015)
- BOOK: Jesus and courageous woman – Elsa Tamez (Study Guide by Sallie M. Cuffee) United Methodist Church (2001)
- <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/albertina-nontsikelelo-sisulu>
- <http://www.sabc.co.za/charlottemaxeke>
- <http://whoswho.co.za/thulimadonsela>
- <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/emily-hobhouse>
- Life Application Study Bible (Tyndale House Publishers 1998)
- Serendipity Bible (Zondervan 1998)
- The Lucado Life Lessons Bible

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