



SMALL GROUP WEEKLY
DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN *of the Bible*



Week 1
7 - 13 August 2022

CELEBRATING WOMAN OF FAITH, GRACE, HOSPITALITY & HOPE!

Celebrating woman of faith, grace, hospitality and hope!

Has there been a woman of great influence in your life? How lucky you are if you have had a Christian role model to emulate! They become our inspiration as we listen to their journey's and see God's presence played out in their lives.

As Christians we refer to scripture as a source of information that guides our daily living and gives purpose to our existence. The Bible gives us many inspirational characters: at times we search for those historical figures who can inspire us positively and affirm our faith in our spiritual journey. These people and their human stories give us a reason to live a quality life centered on God's values and inspire us to adopt life giving characteristics for own lives. Some of these people have been so influential that many people are (even today) named after them.

There are many women we can learn and explore in scripture but for the purpose of our August series, which is commemorated as women's month we chose only four namely: MARY, HANNAH, RAHAB and SARAH. You will discover (perhaps for the first time) the unmistakable chronology of God's redemptive work in history through their lives. These women were not ancillary to his plan but rather were at the center of it.

Join us every week as we explore each women character and learn life lessons from their lives. May these Biblical woman reawaken our courage, offer us hope, inspire our vision, and teach us values that we can embody in order to transform ourselves and society. Knowing that, like us, it was not their natural abilities that made these women extraordinary but the power of the one true God whom they worshipped and served.

CONTENT:
Weekly Sunday sermon Bible readings, worship song, reflection, small group questions and family time
Daily Bible readings, a memory verse and a prayer for individual contemplation

- Week 1:** Sunday 7 August **MARY – Blessed among woman.**
- Week 2:** Sunday 14 August **HANNAH – A portrait of feminine grace.**
- Week 3:** Sunday 21 August **RAHAB – A horrible life redeemed.**
- Week 4:** Sunday 28 August **SARAH – hoping against hope.**

WEEK 1

Mary: Blessed among women

Among many women in scripture the one that really stands out is Mary, she is remarkable woman who found favor in God's sight. The fact that she is chosen by God to be the one who will carry and give birth to the savior of the world makes her to be a unique figure in scripture. However, in as much as we acknowledge that she was chosen by God, we are careful not to elevate her too much to become demigoddess or a quasi-deiform creature who somehow transcended the rest of her race.

WORSHIP SONG:



Elevation Worship - **The Blessing** (Lyrics) ft. Kari Jobe & Cody Carnes <https://youtu.be/uZ55mDL7dA0>

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION WRITTEN BY: REV KAMOGELO MONOAMETSI

Mary is the equivalent of the Hebrew "Miriam". The name may be derived from the Hebrew word for "bitter". Ruth is the classical example, her mother-in-law Naomi referred to herself as "Mara" a reference to the bitterness of her trials. Names are crucial and, in most cases, they assist in understanding the life of an individual because some people's names define the experiences in which they were born or what parents hoped for in the child. In this context we are given insight of Mary's experiences of hardships and bitterness. Arguably her life was underpinned by hardships and trials. Her hometown was a forlorn community in a poor district of Galilee. Mary lived in an area all her life where good things probably were scarce. We are told that she had a sister according to *John 19:25*. Notably, there is no adequate information that is accurate on Mary's sister. Mary was also a close relative of Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (*Luke 1:36*). The nature of the relationship is not explicitly clear, they might have been cousins, or Elizabeth might have been Mary's aunt.

Is there any other thought that could have occupied our minds when we receive the news proclaimed (kerygma) that Mary is the blessed one among women? Similarly, we can question the magnitude of the favor received by Mary that has made her to be blessed among all woman. *Luke 30-31* "You have found favor with God", it echoes the same sentiments expressed in the content that the angel had already conferred see (*Gen 6: 8*). However, Luke does not make reference to the prophecy contained in *Isaiah 7:14*, although he may well have had it in mind. But also compare the angels' message to Hagar in *Gen 16:11*. We can attempt to ascertain Mary's interpretation of this message from the angel. Did she think that it meant unbroken happiness, success of some kind? If this was her thinking, then she immediately got disappointed and perhaps thought this was an illusion. Is it not the case that we often think that God's favor is pleasure and prosperity? Some of these may come from God's bestowing hand but they are not the same as blessings. Sometimes God's supreme favor may have been revealed in a situations that was very hard, but by confronting it the soul becomes heroic. God's favor for a nation or for the world may be given in great challenges: when a people's real faith is winnowed and put to a

BIBLE READINGS

Psalms 30:1-10

Isaiah 26:1-8

Luke 1: 26-30

Luke 1:26-30

New International Version – UK

The birth of Jesus foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God.'

costly test. It is the lives which have been given something challenging to do and to bear (even though they may have been bruised in the process) which have truly known the favor of God.

In respect of the celebration of Women’s month: we celebrate women who embody Mary’s life experiences, a life of bitterness and hardships. However, God chose a woman in the character of Mary to bring salvation to the world. She was chosen by God to give birth to the saviour of the world, the one who will restore and reconcile humanity to God! We might be talking about Mary’s as if she is a historical figure, but her experiences are replicated today. We have women in our society who gave birth to real giants who contributed to the liberation of the society. They give birth to gifted, talented and capable children who are a light to the nation. We celebrate our women who are heroines of our faith, our spiritual journey and existence.

Life Application

Celebrate and honour the woman in your life this week, especially those who had (are having) a hard life.

We should honor women for their indispensable role they have played and continue to play in our society, their resilience and unimaginable ability to raise children under difficult circumstances. Enduring difficulties of raising children as single parents, crying tears, but never choosing to give up as an option. Women who are left alone in wilderness of unemployment, but they can navigate their way into the successes of this world. Women are blessed creatures who honor God and possess all the attributes needed by the society. Let us celebrate the Mary’s of our time!

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Think of one woman who stands out for you in your community. What is unique about her? What values does she possess and how has she influenced you?
2. What attributes can we learn from Mary’s character?
3. How do we measure God’s favor in our lives and what does it mean for you?
4. Identify a woman in the bible who is similar to Mary and discuss how they impact your spiritual journey?

DAILY MEMORY VERSE AND PRAYER

DAY	VERSE	PRAYER
MONDAY	<u>Psalm 1:1</u> “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers”	God of righteousness you call us to a life of holiness and godliness. Help us to good in the midst of wickedness. Amen
TUESDAY	<u>Proverbs 3:13</u> “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding”	God of all knowledge who can count the stars, nothing is hidden from you. Bless us with your wisdom to live wisely and please you with our lives. Amen
WEDNESDAY	<u>Acts 20:35</u> “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”	Almighty God, Omniscient God, God our provider we are thankful for the small things at our disposal. We remember that there are many who do not have the privilege of all the things we have. Bless them Lord and help us to share with them. Amen

THURSDAY	<u>Job 5:17</u> <i>“Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.”</i>	Gracious and merciful God, you cast our sins away from us like north far from south and east from west. Correct us with your love and discipline us with your gracious heart. Amen
FRIDAY	<u>Luke 1:45</u> <i>“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!”</i>	Generous God, your infinite and unconditional love sustains us not because we deserve it but because your grace is a free gift to us. Fulfill your promises, to make us prosper, to set us free from exploitation and oppression, to protect us and to provide for us. Amen
SATURDAY	<u>Proverbs 28:14</u> <i>“Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble”</i>	God of all blessings, we are always safe to tremble before you, to crawl at the feet of your altar of love and peace. we are assured there is safety when we are with you God. Amen



BY JENNY BLAKE – CHILDREN’S PASTOR

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Pray daily: Set up family time for prayer and devotions and stick to this arrangement. All devotions should always begin by with a prayer. Ask a family member to pray or one of the children.

Scripture Reading: Luke 1: 26-30

Activity/Family Moment:

Play “Simon Says” to remember the importance of obedience to God. Remember that we still have fun while obeying God.

Mary found out that she was going to be the mother of Jesus, she was willing to do what God asked her to do. Because she believed the special message that the angel gave her, she got to be used as part of God’s amazing plan for redeeming the world.

Mary said yes to God even though she was scared. Mary trusted God even though she was placed in a very tough situation and Mary had faith. Faith that God would not leave her even when things got scary.

In *-Luke 1:26-27* There are a few words to note here.

- It’s worth mentioning that the town of Nazareth was not a very fancy, well-known place. No one would have expected a king to come out of that place. Yet God works in amazing, miraculous, and mysterious ways. He came to Mary.
- “Betrothed” meant that she was engaged to be married to Joseph, but they weren’t married yet. Joseph was from King David’s ancestry, which was important because God’s promise had to do with someone who came from David’s line.
- *Note: You may opt to avoid or dance around the “virgin” element for younger children. Kids may ask what the word means. While it does no harm to explain, it may be a conversation better suited for you parents to decide.

Questions you can talk through:

- Have you ever felt scared? What did you do to feel better?
- Do you have someone in your life that you trust? Why do you trust them? (Maybe they keep their word, are kind, honest, they don't lie etc.)
- Do you think you can trust God? Why?
- What does it mean to have faith in God? (to have hope, to believe, to know, to love)
- Would you like God to use you in Gods great plan for the world? – that sounds very big and daunting but Gods plan for you today may just be saying a kind word to someone or to stand up for someone who is picked on by others. Do you think you could say yes to God for something like that?
- How would we know what plan we are saying yes to? We can find out by praying to God, reading your bible and remember God will tell you what you need to know when the time is right!

Close with a prayer thanking God for sending us Jesus. Acknowledge His power and control, and ask for help in being willing to let Him work in our lives.