



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 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
Daily

Sunday sermon Bible readings, worship song, reflection, small group questions and family time
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 4

Sarah: Hoping against hope

Sarah is affectionately known in scripture as the wife of a great patriarch Abraham, because of this one would expect her to conduct herself in such a dignified manner but reading through the biblical account we experience something different. She was a nagging wife, very manipulative, mean, temperament, impatient, jealousy, erratic, and pouty. A study in contrasts and contradictions reveals that sometimes she grew weak in faith, her own heart led her astray. This all about being human. In spite of many challenges both in her faith and personality, she vacillated but she ultimately persevered against unbelievable obstacles and the steadfastness of her faith became the central figure of her legacy.

WORSHIP SONG:



All my hope (Hillsong)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyHZwkd4bys>

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION WRITTEN BY: REV GAVIN LANDERS

An enormous amount of what God accomplishes is in the realm of what we consider to be the natural, normal, expected and ordinary. If anything, the people of Scripture that have been used by God, by any assessment, have maybe been too normal, too ordinary and too human. Sarah demonstrates this well. God will call whoever He chooses and form them however He chooses – often in very normal ways as He brings about His purposes in this world.

Sarah or Sarai in the text for today was to play a very particular role in participating in God's purposes for this world. A large part of God's formation of Isaac's parents happened in those childless years of marriage. These were not wasted years but years that were part of God's word that never fails.

We may be inclined to assess Sarai as unfit to carry out God's purposes in this world. Her faith fails and disappointing acts are entered into. In the passage set for today, we find that Sarai has given up on God's promise that she will birth a child and she makes a human plan to substitute the apparent lack of action on God's plan. And so she devises a plan that causes disharmony in her household. The levels of resentment, manipulation, anger and disregard gets so bad that Hagar flees the household.

Elsewhere, we are told of Sarai's and Abram's disregard of the purposes of God in their lives. It includes Sarai being given over to other men as a slave (Gen 12) as well as Sarai laughing in disbelief when reminded

BIBLE READINGS

Genesis 16: 1-9

Hebrews 11: 11

Luke 13: 10-17

Genesis 16:1-9

New International Version – UK
Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.' Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, 'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May The LORD judge between you and me.' ⁶ 'Your slave is in your hands,' Abram said. 'Do with her whatever you think best.' Then Sarai ill-treated Hagar; so she fled from her. ⁷ The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. ⁸ And he said, 'Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?' 'I'm running away from my mistress Sarai,' she answered. ⁹ Then the angel of the LORD told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.'

about God’s purposes to give her a child (Gen 18). Yet even so, we are reminded that God chooses and uses unlikely people for his purposes - those who are in some way inept, unprepared, incapable or unsuited. But there is another aspect to Sarai’s life. There are moments in Sarai’s life where she demonstrates tremendous faith. In response to God’s call, she joins her husband in leaving all that is familiar - friends, some family, everything that meant safety and prosperity, for an unspecified destination (Gen 12:1-3) which will only later be revealed. This is an act of extreme faith.

One of God’s promises to Abram in the calling of becoming the father of a great nation was that a child would be born to him and Sarai. Despite being subjected to decades of barrenness before this promise is fulfilled (Gen 17:17,21:5), Sarai and her husband are still together, “hanging in”, getting up to face another day. Childlessness was an experience that no doubt brought much pain. It was burdensome and tiring and caused anguish and strong emotion. But within these decades there is also trust and patience and awaiting for God’s appointed time. That is no insignificant faith journey!

And so Sarai’s story is a story of hope; it’s a story of faith being born in the midst of disillusionment and hopelessness and mistakes.

Life Application

Let’s take heart from Sarai’s story. Can we dare to hope that God has heard us crying out to him in need and wait for God’s appointed time? We, like Sarai will doubt and question and act out as, either our faith in God being who He is wavers, or as we question whether we are worthy to be treated with such favour. God too will use you and use all that you consider natural, normal, expected and ordinary about you as well as a sprinkling of that which is super-natural, abnormal, exceptional and extraordinary in God using you to advance the cause of His kingdom in your world. Let us simply continue to serve a holy, saving, merciful, powerful, loving and righteous God!

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Share an account where you or another had a prayer of need answered.
2. What have you felt God calling you to?
3. Has there been a promise sensed in the call God has given?
4. Have you felt your faith wavering by an apparent lack of evidence that God is accomplishing His call on your life?
5. Have you felt not worthy enough for God’s calling? Why?
6. Pray to get back in touch with God’s call and to seek clarity for God’s call in your tomorrows.

DAILY MEMORY VERSE AND PRAYER

DAY	VERSE	PRAYER
MONDAY	<u>Psalm 9:18</u> “But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perishes.”	God, I hope in you hearing my cry of need. Amen
TUESDAY	<u>Job 8:13</u> “Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless.”	Father restore my hope when it wavers. Amen
WEDNESDAY	<u>Job 11:18</u> “You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.”	Father keep me safe and secure in your hope. Amen
THURSDAY	<u>Proverbs 11:7</u> “Hopes placed in mortals die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing.”	Father keep me hoping in You and not in anything or anyone else. Amen.
FRIDAY	<u>Galatians 5:5</u> “For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.”	Thy will be done in my world as it is in heaven. Amen

SATURDAY	<u>Psalm 25:5</u> "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long."	Father, I place my trust in you and ask you to love me with all you've got. Amen
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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: Read the story of Sarah. Genesis 17: 15-21

Activity/Family Moment:

Sarah's story

Read the story of Sarah. Genesis 17: 15-21

We learn so much from Sarah. We know she was promised a family by God, and she waited many years before that promise was fulfilled. We see that we are very like Sarah, sometimes while in our waiting we doubt that the promise may be fulfilled. We may get grumpy if we have to wait a long time and we might try and do things for that promise to happen quicker.

Think of a time where you had to wait for something (maybe a present for your birthday, waiting to be fetched from school, waiting for your favourite program, waiting for supper). How did it feel waiting? How would you feel if you had to wait until you were 90 years old?

Sarah was 90 years old before her promise of a child was fulfilled!

God blesses families, no matter how they look, discuss how God has blessed your family. End in a time of prayer. Thank God for blessing your family. Each member can thank God for their own blessings they may had experienced.