

Abigail: Clinging to What's Right

"For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves." - 1 Peter 3:5

1 Samuel 25: 1-42

There are many amazing women throughout the Bible that we can look to that influence our thinking, our actions, and reactions. One of these women is Abigail.

Let me introduce you to Abigail, whose name means, "my father's joy". In 1 Samuel 25, we meet Abigail, the wife of Nabal, a wealthy man. When we first hear of her, she is described as "intelligent and beautiful" (1 Samuel 25: 3). It seems as if Abigail has it all -- riches, intelligence, and beauty. Except, her husband Nabal is described as "surly and mean in his dealings" (1 Samuel 25:3). When they say opposites attract, Abigail and her husband would have been the poster children for this saying!

David, while he is in the wilderness trying to elude King Saul, hears of Nabal shearing sheep. He sends ten of his men to compliment Nabal and tell of how his men respected Nabal's shepherds. David asks for a favor in return because he knows that Nabal is wealthy and will soon have a party (1 Samuel 25:4-9). Nabal, in turn pretends not to know David, and is rude and ends up inciting David's anger. So much to the point where David and many of his men return with swords to confront Nabal.

Abigail hears of her husband's communication with David's servants and prepares to meet him on the way as he comes to destroy Nabil's household. (1 Samuel 25:22). Abigail, in her wisdom, ends up explaining that she understands that her husband is difficult to deal with and convinces David to refrain from bloodshed (1 Samuel 25:28-31).

If you continue reading, you will see that Abigail tells her husband of her intervention on his and his servants' lives the day following his banquet. The scripture says, "About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died." (1 Samuel 25: 38). Abigail ends up becoming the wife of David after her Nabal's death! (1 Samuel 25: 39-42).

What lessons can we learn from Abigail? Here are some things to consider:

- Abigail clung to positivity and a sense of fairness in the face of having to deal with someone who was negative all the time. **Choose joy in the midst of difficult situations. It's difficult to react with joy, but God gives us peace.**
- Abigail could have easily allowed David to come for her "surly" husband, but she chose to act to spare his life. Surely, she also thought about the men under him as well! She was more concerned about them than her own reputation! She was certainly a woman that valued God being in control rather than being in control herself. She could have used her wealth, beauty, or intelligence in an ungodly way to deal with David, but she chose humility instead. **God is always fighting for you, ladies!**
- From our point of view, remember that those who seem to "have it all" still have something to deal with in their lives. This is a great reminder to all of us as we reach out to women of all walks of life, because all people lack something when they are without God. **We all need God!**

Scriptures to Reflect on: **1 Peter 3: 1-6, 8-11** and **Romans 12:9**

May we all have the humility and courage to face difficult times in our lives with the same grace and positive reaction that Abigail demonstrated.

Happy Women's Month,

Zandre

March 8, 2020

From Ann Vines at North River Church of Christ

Happy International Women's Day! While this day may only be here once a year, we can continue to celebrate the amazing women in our lives and learn from the inspiring women in the Bible whose faith and trust in God are worthy of imitating. Check out this refreshing article on Jochebed (Moses' Mother).

In Exodus chapter 2 verses 1-3 we encounter a Hebrew slave living in Egyptian captivity during a time when the Pharaoh has decreed that all male Hebrew babies be thrown into the river Nile. She has just delivered a beautiful baby boy, and rather than see him killed she decides to hide him, even though she has no position or privilege that will assure his safety. What a powerful picture of a mother's love and determination as well as a reminder of God's love for his people!

Isaiah 49:15-16 (NASB)

"Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you." Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.

We later learn from Exodus 6 that this fierce mother's name is Jochebed, meaning "Jehovah is her glory" or "glory of Jehovah". She has only 3 short months with her baby (you've probably figured out by now that his name is Moses!) before she is unable to keep his existence secret. Now, instead of hiding, she is called to action. She obtains a small basket and makes it waterproof. Then, after nursing him to sleep (my conjecture) she places Moses into the basket, and sets the basket among the reeds at the edge of the River Nile. This is the moment of Jochebed's story that captivates me - the moment when she is able to let go of her son and walk away so that he can have a chance to live, demonstrating her love through action and resolve. And, I have to believe, showing us a picture of the courage we gain when our trust is in Jehovah and not in our own power to effect change. How else could she have pulled her hands away from that beautiful bundle without her heart being broken beyond repair? She hoped that Pharaoh's daughter would find her baby and love him as her own, but she could do no more than leave him to be found and entrust him into God's care.

Jochebed reminds me that trusting God is the only way to survive a world that is often cold, uncaring, and unjust. I think of her during those three months of waiting and hiding and ask myself where my own mind goes in times of uncertainty or distress. How much better it is when I let go of my burdens, my distress, and my plans, and place them all in His hands.

Proverbs 3:5-8 (NASB)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.

-Your sister, Ann Vines

Often women believe that Proverbs 31 doesn't really apply to our modern lives. But *I believe that God's Word stands the test of time, don't you?* God's Word is still relevant today! Below are 10 *simple* lessons the Proverbs 31 Woman demonstrates on how as Christian women today; we can all be Proverbs 31 Women.

1. Faith. She loves Jesus with all of her heart. A Virtuous Woman serves God with all of her heart, mind, and soul. *She seeks God's will for her life and follows His ways.* (Proverbs 31: 26, Proverbs 31: 29 – 31, Matthew 22: 37, John 14: 15, Psalm 119: 15)

2. Marriage. She is a faithful bride. A Virtuous Woman respects her husband. She does him good all the days of her life. She is trustworthy and a helpmeet. But first and foremost she is the bride of Christ. *You do not need an earthly husband to be a virtuous woman!* (Proverbs 31: 11- 12, Proverbs 31: 23, Proverbs 31: 28, 1 Peter 3, Ephesians 5, Genesis 2: 18)

3. Mothering. She is a loving mother and her children call her blessed. A Virtuous Woman teaches her children the ways of her Father in heaven. She nurtures her children with the love of Christ, disciplines them with care and wisdom, and trains them in the way they should go. *All of us are spiritual moms to so many.* You do not need to have children of your own to be this kind of mother. (Proverbs 31: 28, Proverbs 31: 26, Proverbs 22: 6, Deuteronomy 6, Luke 18: 16).

4. Health. She takes care of her physical, mental, and spiritual health. A *Virtuous Woman cares for her body.* She prepares healthy food for her family. (Proverbs 31: 14 – 15, Proverbs 31: 17, 1 Corinthians 6: 19, Genesis 1: 29, Daniel 1, Leviticus 11)

5. Service. She serves others with love and kindness. A Virtuous Woman serves her husband, her family, her friends, and her neighbors with a *gentle and loving spirit.* She is charitable. (Proverbs 31: 12, Proverbs 31: 15, Proverbs 31: 20, 1 Corinthians 13: 13)

6. Stewardship. She is a wise steward of the gifts God has given her. A Virtuous Woman *spends money wisely*. She is careful to purchase quality items, which her family needs. (Proverbs 31: 14, Proverbs 31: 16, Proverbs 31: 18, 1 Timothy 6: 10, Ephesians 5: 23, Deuteronomy 14: 22, Numbers 18: 26)

7. Industry. She is industrious and works with willing hands. A Virtuous Woman works willingly with her hands. She sings praises to God and *does not grumble while completing her tasks*. (Proverbs 31: 13, Proverbs 31: 16, Proverbs 31: 24, Proverbs 31: 31, Philippians 2: 14)

8. Homemaking. She is a good manager of her home. A Virtuous Woman is a homemaker. She creates an inviting atmosphere of warmth and love for her family, friends and neighbors. *She uses hospitality to minister to her community*. (Proverbs 31: 15, Proverbs 31: 20 – 22, Proverbs 31: 27, Titus 2: 5, 1 Peter 4: 9, Hebrews 13: 2)

9. Time. She spends her time on that which is good. A Virtuous Woman uses her time wisely. She works diligently to complete her daily tasks. *She does not spend time dwelling on those things that do not please the Lord*. (Proverbs 31: 13, Proverbs 31: 19, Proverbs 31: 27, Ecclesiastes 3, Proverbs 16: 9, Philippians 4:8)

10. Beauty. She is creative and embraces beauty and godliness. A Virtuous Woman is a woman of worth and beauty. *She has the inner beauty that only comes from Christ*. She uses her creativity and sense of style to create beauty in her life and the lives of her loved ones. (Proverbs 31: 10, Proverbs 31: 21 – 22, Proverbs 31: 24 -25, Isaiah 61: 10, 1 Timothy 2: 9, 1 Peter 3: 1 – 6)

So encouraging how God is working so powerfully in all of our lives. So encouraged and inspired by all of you.

Happy Women's Month-
Anne Coleman

March 16, 2020

From Jacqueline Guthrie at North River Church of Christ

Today's article is especially encouraging, convicting and timely. It calls us to put our trust in God and his promises in the midst of hardship:

The Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17: 7-16

The story of this nameless widow is powerful and encouraging and in this present time there is so much we can learn from her.

She was not an Israelite, not one of God's people, but Jesus referenced her in Luke 4 when he said, "I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon..."

What was it about this woman, this widow that God chose her over all the other widows??

We know there was a severe famine throughout the land. People were going through a difficult time and there probably was not much food or supplies to go around. In 1 Kings 17:9, God tells Elijah to go to this woman because **He has commanded her** to supply him with food. Elijah may have speculated, "Great! God is sending me to someone who has great resources! God has commanded her because she has much."

However, when he first meets her and asks her for water and bread, she replies with,

"As surely as the Lord your God lives...I do not have any bread---only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son that we may eat it--and die." 1 King 17: 12

Again, we know there is a severe famine throughout the land, but why does God send Elijah to this woman? To this non Israelite widow who is preparing her final meal and preparing to die? She does not even have enough for herself...a handful of flour....what can you realistically make with that???

Elijah replies to her and says, "Do not be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring me it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land."

Put yourself in her shoes.

You are a single mother who has lost her your husband. There is a severe famine throughout the land. Times are desperate, things are looking very bleak and all hope seems lost. This stranger you have never met before strolls into your town and tells you to make him *first* a small cake of bread *after* you have already told him that you only have a handful of flour and are preparing your *last meal* to die. He asks you to put his needs before your son's and then makes the shocking declaration that God has said the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry!

What would you? What would your response be? Would you....

- Question this man even though he started the conversation with, "Don't be afraid"?
- Think he was lying? Believe he was a con artist trying to get one over on a helpless widow?
- Consider that the message may not be from God?
- Ask yourself, If this is from God, then why would He send him to me? Could he not send him to a family that has more than I do?
- What if God does not hold up his end of the bargain?

God gave Elijah a message about this widow and made a promise to meet her needs if she obeyed and provided for Elijah.

Her choices: Believe God, trust Him and do as she is told **or** reject it all as a sham

Her response: "She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah." I Kings 17: 15-16

What great example of trust and obedience!

If I am honest with myself, I don't know if I would have believed Elijah and the promise of God. I can be cynical and in hard desperate times, it is easy to have the mentality of "each man for himself". It is easy to justify hoarding and looking out only for "numero uno" when we are scared and do not know if we will have enough to provide for ourselves much less someone else, especially someone we do not know.

Her faith in God's promise is what inspires me! In times of uncertainty when we fear that our basic needs will not be met or fear the future, holding on to God's promises is what helps us to not only survive, but thrive and also bless those around us.

Note that it says there was food every day for Elijah, the woman and her *family*. Family denotes more than just her son; probably included her parents and her siblings and their families! She who barely had enough for herself and was preparing to die was able to provide food **every day** for those around her including Elijah all because she chose to trust God and obey. In essence, she not only brought life to herself, but to those around her because she chose to believe God's promise.

Trust God's promise and obey!!

Her story always reminds me that I desire to have the type of faith and trust in God that makes me the exception and not the norm. Like Jesus said, there were many widows during this time. She was just one of a million other widows all experiencing the severe famine throughout the land. However, her faith in God, her trust in God's promises, and her obedience placed her story in the Bible. Jesus even lifted her up as an example to follow!

No matter how God may be commanding you, trust and obey even if it does not make sense to you, even if you feel like you do not have enough, and even if you are afraid. Trust in God's promises and obey Him and see how— He provides for you and takes care of you!

-Your sister Jacqueline Guthrie

Mary, mother of Jesus, Son of God; an amazing woman of faith, highly favored. Mary was not divine; she was just as real as other mothers-to-be. She faced great moments of joy along with occasions of sorrow and despair. Humble, obscure, young Mary was the one God Himself chose to conceive, bear, and raise Jesus. Mary would also be the grief-stricken mother who watched her bruised, beaten, flogged Son nailed to a cross. She would watch as he was tortured; suffer and die.

Like Mary, discovering I was pregnant, at a very young age, was a life-altering moment. I knew that my world was about to undergo a dramatic change. My life would no longer be that of a carefree teenager, instead I was about to embark on a lifelong journey called motherhood. I can relate to Mary on many levels. I was going to have a child and my life would be dedicated to him and any other children God granted me. I prepared myself emotionally and physically. I had joyful, expectant moments and moments of fear. I also dealt with my truth, I was an unmarried teen and expecting one of God's greatest gifts to women: a child. Unlike Mary, my first reaction was fear.

We often ask "why" but Mary did not question why. When the angel Gabriel brought her the news that she was highly favored and chosen to bear the Son of God she simply asked: *"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"* (Luke 1:34). Once she understood God's plan she simply stated: *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."* (Luke 1:38). Mary was humble, a peasant girl from an obscure town; she exemplified reverence, obedience, and faithfulness. And thus, she was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God.

Mary is not mentioned a lot in scripture; but you can feel her presence. She is yet another example of how God uses the ordinary, oftentimes obscure and humble. Mary was accepting of God's will for her life. Like all mothers she prepared for her child's birth; she swaddled him in cloths once born – you can imagine the tenderness and love as she embraced her child. Mary taught Him; guided Him; with Joseph presented Him to the Lord (Luke 2:22). Mary too was caused anxious moments and reprimanded Jesus for remaining at the temple when he should have followed them home (Luke 2:48). At what was possibly a family wedding in Cana, she pointed out the lack of wine – she knew Him; she knew He would provide and there He performed His first miracle.

Like us, Mary had relatives and relationships; she participated in events and had a social and spiritual life. Mary dealt with all the things mothers deal with; she conceived, carried, cared for; nurtured; taught; reprimanded; worried; instructed; pondered and was devoted to her Son. She would also watch as he was mistreated, scoffed and misunderstood. (*"Then they scoffed, 'He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.' They were deeply offended and refused to believe him"* (Mark 6:3)). She was present at his birth; painfully watched His crucifixion; at His feet upon His death. She watched the child she loved die a heinous death. Mary remained faithful, humble and obedient to the Father's will. I am sure she rejoiced at the resurrection.

A woman's journey through life is a dance; a mingling of happiness and sorrow; joys and pain; delights and disappointments. We rejoice in life and love; we grieve with disappointments, illness and death. The roads we travel in our journey are not always pleasant; sometimes we take

the wrong turns; but with our eyes fixed and focused on Jesus, we know we'll find the way; we'll heal; we'll rejoice again. His mercies endure forever.

Gabriel said to Mary "rejoice," and in her Magnificat, she did just that. She acknowledged that she is lowly and in need of a Savior; yet confessed that she was blessed throughout all generations (Luke 1:46-55).

Magnificat

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me--holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1:46-55)

Mary loved her Son. They had a deep mutual relationship. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He entrusted his mother to John and "from that hour" he "took her to his own home" (John 19:27). He made certain she would be cared for before he gave His spirit up.

What was it that made Mary so special?

What should we learn from Mary?

How do you relate to her?

Why do you think God uses 'ordinary' people?

What have you been asked/called to do?

Cecie Andaluz-Hammett

March 19, 2020