Women's Bible Study





1 Peter 3:3-4

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Heart of a Woman

"let your adornment be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." ~ 1 Peter 3:4

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As you sit down to study, begin in prayer. Before reading the lesson and answering the questions, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth to you. You may find it helpful to have a few study aids such as a dictionary, a concordance, and more than one translation of the Bible. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) and New King James Version (NKJV) were used for this study guide.

You may also find the following online resources helpful:

BibleGateway.com BlueLetterBible.org WebstersDictionary1828.com

The Bible is an endless mine of priceless treasure. The *Growing Stronger* section is designed to help you dig more treasures from God's Word. May what you find there dazzle you!

At the end of each lesson, there is a *Lift Your Heart* section. This will be an important and personal part of the study. You are encouraged to write in a journal what transpires as you listen and respond to the whispers from God's heart to yours. When you look back through your journal at the end of the study, you will be blessed and amazed at your insight and growth.

Study Notes – Introduction	

Eve... Mother of All Living

Eve came into the world perfectly at peace with God and her husband, Adam. God created Eve to be exactly what Adam needed, and he was perfectly suited for her as well. She did not know pain, misunderstanding, weariness, envy, grief, or guilt until she listened to her enemy and doubted God.

Read Genesis 1:26-3:24

1. What are some of the divine purposes God has for women?

Genesis 2:18

Genesis 2:24

Genesis 3:16

Ephesians 5:22-24

- 2. What are some of the needs a man has that only a woman can fulfill? (Genesis 2:18-25)
- 3. What does being "one flesh" in a marriage mean, both physically and spiritually?

- 4. Temptation starts with questioning God's commands. In Genesis 3:1, what command was questioned?
- 5. Compare Genesis 2:16-17 with 3:2-3.

"Knowledge of God's Word is a bulwark against deception, temptation, accusation, even persecution." ~ Edwin Louis Cole

- 6. How did Satan refute and deny what God said?
- 7. As the serpent tempted Eve, what desires and fears did he appeal to?

8. What desires and fears make you vulnerable to temptation?

9. When Eve was caught in her sin, how did she try to cover it up?

Explain how Eve experienced each of the following personal consequences:
 Shame:

Blame:

Pain:

Growing Stronger...

Throughout Scripture, trees have a meaningful place. Read Genesis chapters 2 and 3 and Revelation chapter 22. Compare the trees mentioned in each book.

How are they similar?

How are they different?

Where else in the Bible are trees prominently mentioned?

Lift Your Heart...

Close your eyes and try to imagine a place of perfect beauty. Think what it must have been like in the Garden of Eden. Imagine what it would be like if you never suffered physical or emotional pain, or felt lonely, ashamed, or guilty. Let your imagination go as you fill in the details of God's original plan for your life. You were created in God's image, for His purpose. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the areas of your life where you are not fulfilling God's plan and meditate on 1 Corinthians 2:9. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Eve	

Sarah's name means "princess". Her life was filled with adventure, intrigue, hope, disappointment...and finally, a happy ending. Her husband was wealthy and powerful, but there was also bitter disappointment and disgrace. Sarah was 10 years younger than Abraham and lived to be 127 years old. The Bible introduces us to Sarah mid-point in her life.

Read Genesis 11:29-12:9 and 1 Peter 3:1-6.

- 1. What do you learn about Sarah (Sarai) and her character?
- 2. Whether you are married or not, are there any areas in these verses where you see a need for improvement in your own life? If so, which ones?
- 3. Compare Genesis 12:11 and 1 Peter 3:3-4. How does God's 'beauty plan' compare with what we find in our world today?

In light of Romans 12:1-2, what can you do to make a real transformation?

4. Read Hebrews 11:1. In your own words, write the definition of faith.

5. How can your belief in God make a difference between faith and fear? Deuteronomy 31:6

"People are like stained - glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

6. What do 1 Peter 3:14-15 and 1 John 4:18 say about fear?

Sarah's barrenness was a disappointment and a stigma. Barrenness was seen as a curse from God; it was even common for a man to divorce his wife if she didn't give him children, especially a son. We see Abraham's love for Sarah in staying with her all these years, but now she is about 75 years old.

7. Read Genesis 15:1-6. Describe the covenant (promise) God made with Abraham.

What kind of pressure do you think this placed on Sarah?

8. Read Genesis 16:1-4. Sarah ran ahead of God's plan, trying to work it out herself. Has there been a time when your faith faltered and you tried to run ahead of God's plan? If so, what were there consequences?

9. Read Genesis 18:9-15. How did Sarah react to God's promise?

Read Genesis 21:1-3. What did God do for Sarah?

In light of Sarah's reaction, how does this encourage your faith?

Growing Stronger...

Sarah grew impatient with God, ran ahead, and took matters into her own hands with disastrous consequences. Read the following verses and write the benefits of being still and waiting on the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

Psalm 40:1

Psalm 46:10

Isaiah 40:31

Lift Your Heart...

We have reviewed the life of Sarah and read the praises of her character and faith. Yet, we have also seen her faults and her weaknesses. God teaches us through both and reveals His character. How do you feel about letting others see your weaknesses so that God will receive glory as He works in and through you? Can you surrender to His plan for your life no matter what that plan is? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Sarah		

A woman of contrasts, Rebekah was hard working, loyal, and had a faith that was strong enough for her to leave her family. She traveled 500 miles to marry a man she had never met. Yet, she trusted more in her own ability to get what she wanted than she did in the promise of God.

1. Read Genesis 24:1-28. What do you learn about Rebekah's character?

2. Read Genesis 25:20-28. What did God tell her about her children?

- 3. In verse 28, we see favoritism in both Isaac and Rebekah. How do you think this affected their sons?
- 4. What are the promises that God gave Rebekah in verse 23?
- What do the following verses reveal to you about God? Deuteronomy 7:9

Psalm 145:13

Hebrews 10:23

- 6. Read Genesis 27:1-17. Why do you think Rebekah resorted to manipulation and trickery instead of relying on God's promises?
- 7. Why is manipulation an inappropriate way to get what you want?

What insight do you gain from the following verses? Proverbs 6:16-19

Proverbs 12:22

"Love comes when manipulation stops; when you think more about the other person than about his or her reactions to you. When you dare to reveal yourself fully. When you dare to be vulnerable."

8. Read Genesis 27:18-28:5. It would seem that Rebekah's scheme worked. Is it unfair that God honored the stolen blessing?

Comment on the following verses: Romans 9:10-16

Isaiah 55:8

9. We see in Genesis 27:41-44 that there were consequences for Rebekah. Yet again, she manipulated the situation and had Jacob sent away, not knowing that she would never see him again. How do you think this ploy affected her relationship with Isaac and Esau?

10. What lesson is there to be learned from this story about attempting to control others and our circumstances?

Growing Stronger...

In Genesis 24:22, 53 we see Rebekah being showered with jewelry and gifts. But where are those treasures today? We know that every material thing, no matter how pretty or valuable, is temporary. It is who we are becoming in God that will last for eternity!

Read Galatians 5:22-23 and list the fruit of the Spirit below.

Tomorrow morning as you dress, use your list as a reminder to "put on" the fruit of the Spirit. For example, as you put rings on your fingers, put on joyfulness, and so on. You will certainly be beautifully dressed!

Lift Your Heart...

Praise God for His manifold blessings and mercies! Read Genesis 33:1-11 and there you will see how the twins are reconciled and that God had blessed Esau as well. Meditate on Proverbs 3:5 and confess to the Lord those areas you are controlling and not trusting. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Rebekah	

It is ironic that Jacob grew up in a rivalry with his brother Esau and then fled to the middle of a rivalry between two sisters. So many things could have been done differently, yet God used all of this for His glory, building up a nation from the ensuing mess.

Read Genesis 29

1. According to verse 20, how many years did Jacob agree to work for Rachel's hand in marriage?

What is said about the love Jacob had for Rachel?

2. How do you think the events described in verses 21-27 affected Rachel and Leah's relationship?

3. According to verses 31-32, God heard the cry of Leah's heart. Read Psalm 46:1 and Psalm 50:15. Have you ever experienced the tender compassion of the Lord as He answered the cry of your heart? Explain your answer.

- 4. In verses 31-34, Leah gives birth to 3 sons. What is her hope as these sons are born?
- 5. In verse 35, what seems to be different about her reaction when Judah is born?

 Read the following verses and cite what you learn about God's perfect love. John 15:12-13

Galatians 2:20

How can these help in troubled relationships?

7. Each sister was dealing with heartache, yet they were of no comfort to each other. Has there been a time when the comfort of a believing sister or friend has gotten you through a tough time? Explain your answer.

"We should go no place that we would not go to in His Presence. But He is not with us just to judge or condemn us; He is near to comfort, protect, guide, encourage, strengthen, cleanse, and help." ~ Billy Graham 8. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Summarize what these verses mean to you.

- 9. Have you experienced a time when you were able to give comfort to someone else because of what you yourself had gone through? If so, how did that make you feel? If not, how do you think it would help?
- 10. Genesis 30:22 says, "Then God remembered Rachel". Do you think God had forgotten about her? Explain your answer.

Growing Stronger...

Read Genesis 24:1-28. What were some similarities and differences between the trip made by Abraham's servant and the trip made by Jacob?

Lift Your Heart...

Sometimes all we have to give God is the mess we have made out of our lives. Yet, as the Creator of all He can create something wonderful. In the midst of the heartache and trials in the lives of Rachel and Leah, God brought forth the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel. It was through the tribe of Judah, the fourth son of Leah, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah was born. Praise God for His mighty works and unfailing love! Perhaps you have made a mess in your life past or present. Do you see a way that God used it or could use it for His glory? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Rachel and Leah		

As a young girl, Miriam showed wisdom and courage; then she rose to be a leader in Israel. She is the first woman recorded in Scripture to praise the Lord; hers is the first dancing recorded in the Bible and she is the first woman to be called a prophetess. Miriam is the "First Lady" of the Bible but her pride set her up for a fall.

1. What does Exodus 2:1-10 tell you about the young Miriam?

Read Exodus 14:13-31 and 15:19-21

- 2. What do you think Miriam and the other women were thinking and feeling as they walked through the Red Sea?
- 3. The women were so joyful they danced! Have you ever been that joyful? If so, how did you express it?

Read Numbers 12

4. What motivated Aaron and Miriam to attack Moses?

Do you think his choice of a wife was the real issue? Explain your answer.

- 5. Why was the Lord so angry with Miriam and Aaron? Verses 6-9
- 6. What are some reasons Miriam was struck with leprosy and Aaron was not?

"Pride always puts self above others and cuts itself off from them as a result." ~ Billy Graham

7. According to 1 Peter 2:1-2, how are you to handle envy and slander?

8. Even when we are forgiven, there are consequences for our sin. List some consequences you have experienced.

9. According to Hebrews 13:17, what should your attitude be toward those in spiritual leadership?

Growing Stronger...

Use a concordance to discover the following: What are some various ways people in the Bible worshiped God?

What other women were called prophetesses?

Lift Your Heart...

Submission doesn't come naturally. But before we criticize our spiritual leaders, we should consider that **God** put them where they are! Our pastors, elders, and teachers need our prayers, love, and encouragement. Remember a specific time when one of them encouraged **you**? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Why not write them a note letting them know how much you appreciate them?

Study notes for Miriam		

The spies found shelter in the house of a harlot named Rahab. She had heard of the marvelous victories the God of Israel had given to His people. Rahab concluded that He must be the true God so she trusted in Him and became a true believer. She proved the reality of her faith by protecting the spies, even though it meant betraying her city.

Read Joshua chapter 2

1. What things do you learn about Rahab and her character?

2. Joshua sent 2 spies to Jericho to discover what they were up against. But the king of Jericho found out they were there. In verses 4-7, what did Rahab do?

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. From verses 8-11, what are some things Rahab believed?

4. Read verses 12-20. What request did Rahab make of the spies?

What condition did the spies put on their vow to Rahab?

Read Joshua 6:1-5

- 5. What fate awaited Jericho?
- 6. God could have created circumstances which would have allowed Rahab and her family to leave the city before the siege. What are some reasons God allowed her to stay?

Read Joshua 6:15-25

7. How was God glorified through "Rahab the harlot"?

How can God be glorified by your past?

How does this encourage you?

Growing Stronger...

Read Matthew 1:5 and Hebrews 11:30-31. What else do you learn about Rahab?

Romans 4:3-5 records that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Do you think this may have also been true of Rahab? Why or why not?

Lift Your Heart...

Rahab interceded on behalf of those she loved and secured their safety and deliverance, even though the walls of Jericho fell flat and all others who lived there were destroyed. We too have the privilege of 'standing in the gap' and interceding on behalf of those we love, through the awesome power of prayer. "For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." (Psalm 34:15) Romans 3:22-24 says that Jesus is our righteousness. Who can you stand in the gap for? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Rahab		

Deborah's vision of the world was shaped not by the political situation of her day, but by her relationship with God. She trusted God implicitly and inspired that same trust in others. Deborah was just the leader Israel needed—a prophetess who heard God and believed Him. Her courage aroused the people, enabling them to throw off foreign oppression.

Read Judges 4 & 5

- 1. In 4:1-3, we see that there was oppression and fear in the land. Yet Deborah seemed to keep her wits about her. What do you think gave her this courage?
- 2. According to Philippians 4:4-7, how can you conquer your own fears?
- 3. Deborah was the only woman in the Bible who was placed as ruler over the people of Israel by the common consent of the people. List the character traits you see in Deborah. Ask the Lord to help you develop those character traits.

4. Israel was being cruelly bullied by the Canaanites under the leadership of Sisera. What was Barak's reaction when Deborah told him of God's plan to deliver His people?

What did Deborah have that Barak lacked?

- 5. God honors obedience (see Exodus 23:22). What do you learn about partial obedience from Judges 4:7-9?
- Trusting God can seem difficult at times. What do the following verses say about trust? Proverbs 3:5-8

Jeremiah 17:5-8

John 14:1

7. Like Barak, we often miss out on God's rich blessings because of our lack of faith and trust. Read Psalm 118:5-9. Are there any situations you are facing in your own life where you need to redirect your focus and place your trust solely on the Lord? Explain your answer.

"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."

8. Deborah stood strong in the face of overwhelming odds. What does her example teach you about facing challenges? (Ephesians 6:10-18)

9. According to the following verses, how can you help those who are struggling in their trials?

Proverbs 27:17

Romans 15:1-2

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Growing Stronger...

There are times in all of our lives when we are called upon to lead others through difficult situations. Perhaps it's a child's first day of school, a co-worker facing a catastrophic illness, or a sister in Christ who has fallen into sin. All of them need the encouragement of God's Word. Look at the strength that can be found in the following promises:

Nehemiah 9:28

Psalm 18:1,3

Psalm 20:6-7

Isaiah 50:10

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

Lift Your Heart...

It is difficult to listen to two people talking at the same time. How can you hear what either of them is saying? Likewise, it is hard to listen to God's voice when you are listening to voices of confusion, discouragement, and condemnation. Deborah's peace and confidence came from her ability to hear God clearly. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you distinguish God's voice from the background noise. As you pray, tune in to the One Voice worth listening to. (See Psalm 46:10) Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Deborah	

Naomi's life certainly didn't turn out anything like the hopes, dreams, or plans she may have had! Yet somehow, she remained a source of love and comfort for her daughters-inlaw and a witness that the God of Israel is mighty and faithful. She teaches us that we should hold our own hopes and dreams gently because God may have a better plan than we could ever imagine.

Read the book of Ruth, noting the things said about Naomi

1. In Ruth 1:1-5, what are some things you learn about Naomi?

- 2. What does Ruth's profession (1:16-17) convey to you about the character of Naomi and how she portrayed Israel and her LORD?
- 3. Naomi's name means "pleasant". In verse 20, what new name did she give herself?

What does that say about how she was feeling about herself?

4. Using verses 1:13, 20, and 21, list what Naomi said about the LORD?

What do these statements reveal Naomi was feeling toward God?

Have you been angry with God? Explain how you handled it.

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	"Bitterness imprisons life; love releases it."	
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- 5. When Naomi encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return to their homes, how did they respond? (Ruth 1:8-17)
- 6. The amount of grain Ruth brought back to Naomi was more than would be expected after only one day of gleaning. In Ruth 2:20, who did Naomi attribute this bountiful blessing to?

Do you think her attitude was beginning to change? Explain your answer.

7. Read Ruth 3:1-2. What is Naomi hoping to provide for Ruth?

8. In verses 4:14-16, what did the women declare to Naomi?

Growing Stronger...

We sometimes encounter times of difficulty and trials in our lives. When it seems like everything secure or familiar is being stripped away, who or what do you turn to? How can we react that portrays the goodness and faithfulness of a loving God in our lives? Read the following verses and explain how they prepare you to persevere through trials and bring God glory.

Psalm 119:10-11, 105

Romans 5:1-5

Philippians 4:4-9

Hebrews 12:1-3

James 1:2-5

Lift Your Heart...

God showed Himself faithful to Naomi in ways she never could have imagined. He had a plan for her life, though she couldn't see it. Thank the Lord for His faithfulness and for His plan for your life, whatever that may be. Then ask Him to give you the courage and strength to follow it. (Jeremiah 29:11-13) Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Naomi

The events of the book of Ruth take place during the time of the judges. Ruth showed her loyalty and love to Naomi by making a total commitment, not only to Naomi, but to the God of Israel. She chose Naomi's country, her people, and her God, even though it meant that the chance of remarriage was slight. Ruth refused to be separated from Naomi and left her family, friends, homeland, and deities. Ruth had a loyal heart for the one true God.

Read the book of Ruth, this time noting the things said about Ruth.

1. When Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their homes, how did Ruth respond? (Ruth 1:14,15)

2. What promises did Ruth make to Naomi in verses 1:16-17?

"The gift of friendship among women is a treasure not to be taken lightly. Women friends become the face of God to one another – the face of grace, of delight, of mercy." ~ Stasi Eldredge

- 3. In Ruth 2:2, what did Ruth request?
- 4. From 2:6-12, list some of the things Boaz knows about Ruth.

What seems to be his attitude toward her?

- 5. In 2:10 and 13, how did Ruth respond to Boaz?
- 6. How does it make you feel when someone conveys to you how much they appreciate you?
- 7. Why is it important to let the people in your life know you appreciate them?

What do you glean from Philippians 2:1-3 and Proverbs 25:11?

- 8. Read Ruth 3:9-15. Ruth reminded Boaz that he was her close relative. How did Boaz respond?
- 9. In verse 3:11, Boaz referred to Ruth as a "virtuous" woman. This is the same word used in Proverbs 31:10. List some characteristics you find in Proverbs 31:10-31 that describe Ruth.

- 10. Read Ruth 4:10-12. When Boaz declared he would take Ruth to be his wife, how did the people respond?
- 11. What do you discover about Ruth in Ruth 4:21-22 and Matthew 1:5-6?

Growing Stronger...

The Bible gives us an account of seven different women who were in the lineage of Jesus, beginning with Sarah and Abraham's son of promise and ending with Mary and God's Son of Promise. (See Matthew 1:2-16) Each one of these women dealt with very difficult circumstances in her life. But each one also has a story of God's faithfulness and compassion. All have been used by God and honored in His Word. These women were Sarah, Leah, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

Read Genesis 38 to learn about the life of Tamar. What were some difficulties she endured?

How did God bless her?

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25 to learn about the life of Bathsheba. What are some of the difficulties she endured?

How did God bless her?

Lift Your Heart...

Just as Ruth needed a Kinsman-Redeemer, so do you. God cannot redeem sinners apart from a Mediator. That is why it was necessary for Him to send His Son, Jesus Christ. Boaz and Ruth's love story is a mirror of the divine love of the Savior for you. As you consider all that Jesus did to redeem you, record your praise and thanksgiving in your journal.

Study notes for Ruth	

Abigail's life was difficult. Her character and her inner beauty were formed by the choices she made. Her faith was strengthened as she ran to God for comfort, protection, and wisdom in dealing with her husband. God used Abigail to save the lives of many people, and even the reputation of a king.

Read 1 Samuel 25

1. List what you learn about Nabal and Abigail in verses 2-3.

_	Nabal	Abigail

- 2. Nabal's servants knew David and his men and knew what they were capable of. What did they convey to Abigail? (see verses 14-17)
- 3. In verse 26, who did Abigail credit for preventing David from taking revenge?

What does this say about her own faith?

"There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God." ~ Albert Barnes 4. Nabal lived up to his name, which means "fool". Read the following verses, and write what you learn about the differences between those who are foolish and those who are wise/prudent.

	Foolish	Wise / Prudent
Proverbs 12:15		
Proverbs 12:16		
Proverbs 14:16		
Proverbs 20:3		

- 5. In 1 Samuel 25:23-31, what are some things Abigail reminded David of?
- 6. Abigail reminded David of his own position as the future king and of God's faithfulness to him. How do you think this showed her wisdom and faith?
- 7. How did David react? (See verses 32-35)
- 8. Abigail waited to speak to Nabal. Why is it best to wait on God's timing? (Psalm 33:20)

Do you find this difficult?

9. What was Abigail's response to David's offer of marriage? (verses 39-42)

What does this reveal about her character?

Growing Stronger...

Webster Dictionary defines revenge as: *retaliating in order to gain satisfaction; trying to get even; repaying in kind – evil for evil.* You are then becoming like the one who wronged you, and two wrongs never make a right! Seeking revenge clouds your thinking and you become like a fool.

What does Deuteronomy 32:35 say about vengeance?

Why is it best to leave revenge in God's hands?

What does Proverbs 25:21-22 say about how you are to treat your enemies?

What did Jesus say in Matthew 5:43-44?

Is there someone the Holy Spirit is prompting you to forgive?

Take a moment and pray for them. Also ask God to help you to completely forgive them.

Lift Your Heart...

Abigail reminded David that his life was bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord his God. Have you ever tied something up in a bundle to keep it safe? Your own life is bound in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus. He can deal with all the complicated situations that drive you crazy and rob you of your peace and joy as easily as throwing a stone from a sling. Trust Him right now, in whatever situation you may find yourself in, so that you may find rest in Him. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Abigail	

The Queen of Sheba... A Heart for Wisdom

Sheba was a fragrant land famous for its perfumes and spices. Their queen had heard of the greatness of Solomon and traveled nearly 1,500 miles to see for herself this man of extraordinary wisdom and knowledge. The queen of Sheba lavished Solomon with a mountain of spices and gold. Her quest was rewarded with that which is much more precious.

Read 1 Kings 10:1-13

- 1. Why was Solomon famous "concerning the Name of the LORD"? (1 Kings 3:9-12)
- 2. What questions might the queen of Sheba have asked Solomon?

What would you have asked him?

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"It takes a great man [or woman] to give sound advice ta	ctfully,
but a greater to accept it graciously."	
	/

3. In Acts 17:10-12, what did the people of Berea do to see if the things Paul said were true?

4. What is wisdom?

Job 28:28

Psalm 90:12

Ecclesiastes 7:12

5. Where does wisdom come from?

Psalm 51:6

Proverbs 2:6

Proverbs 13:10

6. Read Matthew 2:1-12 and list the similarities between the queen and the Wise Men.

7. In 1 Kings 10:2, the queen "spoke with him about all that was in her heart." Do you have someone whom you can tell what is on your heart? Why is this important? (See Proverbs 15:22 and 27:17)

- 8. When the queen of Sheba left for home, what did she take with her?
- 9. The queen of Sheba had great success in her visit with Solomon. She established trade relations, acquired royal bounty, and gained the wisdom she sought. Verse 13 says, "King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked." What promise do you have in Psalm 37:4?

Growing Stronger...

List the gifts you find in the following verses:

Romans 12:4-8

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Circle the gifts you already have and pray for more!

Lift Your Heart...

Try to imagine the scene as the queen presented her gifts to Solomon. There is a huge cache of exotic spices: saffron, cinnamon, cardamom, and more. The scent of perfumes such as balsam, frankincense, and sandalwood filled the air. The precious stones included emeralds, sapphires, and rubies. Then were piles of lustrous, gleaming gold. All these spoke of the high esteem that the queen of Sheba had for Solomon, the King of Israel. How can we shower gifts on our King Jesus? We can lavishly praise God with thankfulness for all that He has done for us. We can be generous with our words of encouragement and love to those around us. We can give of our time to our church and to those in need. How about giving a message of hope to someone who desperately needs it? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for the Queen of Sheba

Elizabeth, like all other married women in Israel, lived in hope of having children. Rather than letting her disappointment define her with bitterness and resentment, she walked righteously before God. In God's timing, her hopes were realized. Her prayers were answered beyond her wildest dreams.

Read Luke 1:5-25

1. In verses 5-7, what do you learn about Zacharias and Elizabeth?

- 2. In spite of Zacharias and Elizabeth's blameless walk before the Lord, what disappointment did they share with Abraham and Sarah?
- 3. Read the following verses and explain how God can use trials and disappointments in your life.

Romans 5:3-4

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

James 1:2-4

How has God used disappointment in your life as an opportunity for growth?

"Disappointment is a trial of your faith. Disappointment is something which, strange as it may seem, has been filtered through God's sovereign fingers of love. It has a purpose. It's for the shaping of you into a beautiful vessel of praise, honor, and glory at His coming." ~ Kay Arthur

4. Zacharias and Elizabeth realized that God had heard their prayers. In Luke 1:15-17, how did Gabriel describe the son they would have?

- 5. According to Luke 1:6, why would Zacharias and Elizabeth would be good parents for this child?
- 6. Read verses 39-45. How did Elizabeth react when Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to see her?

7. How did God use Elizabeth to encourage and prepare Mary for what lay before her?

Growing Stronger...

Read Luke 1:59-80. Elizabeth's pregnancy would have received a lot of attention from those around them. It might have caused people to think about Abraham and Sarah and of all the promises and prophecies connected to the promised Messiah. How might these stirred-up memories and ideas have prepared hearts for the ministry of John the Baptist?

In verses 76-79, what was Zacharias' prophecy about his son?

Read Luke 3:1-6. How was Zacharias' prophecy fulfilled?

Lift Your Heart...

Elizabeth was a woman of strong faith whose life was lived "righteous before God." She was a good companion and a strong support to her husband. She was also a source of comfort and encouragement for her young relative, Mary. Ask God to develop these characteristics more fully in your own life and watch for those opportunities to grow. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Elizabeth

Mary remains one of the most honored women in the Bible and perhaps one of the most misrepresented and misunderstood. We cannot fully comprehend what the words spoken by the angel Gabriel meant to her. Certainly she was elated to hear that she would bear the Messiah Israel needed and waited for; it was the hope of every Jewish girl to be chosen. Yet Mary was also startled and concerned because she was an unmarried virgin. Although she was very young, her sure faith enabled her to give an unqualified yes to God's plan for her life. She could not have known the soul-piercing sorrow that was a part of that plan.

Read Luke 1:26-38

1. Imagine the scene as Gabriel speaks with Mary. Describe what she may have been thinking and feeling in these verses?

Verse 28

Verse 31

Verses 32-33

Verse 35

2. In verses 26-27, we see that Mary had exciting plans for her future: a wedding, a home of her own, and children. Although everything that Gabriel told Mary had the potential to destroy all of her dreams, in verse 38 she humbly said yes to God's plan. Has God ever interfered with your hopes and dreams? How did you respond? How did it all work out? (See Proverbs 16:9)

"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." ~ Mary, Luke 1:38

3. Read Luke 1:46-55. What does Mary's song of worship tell you about her character and the things that were important to her?

4. Twice in Luke chapter 2 (verses 19 and 51) we read that Mary treasured and pondered things about her first born in her heart. What things do you ponder in your heart?

5. Mary was truly blessed among women to be the mother of the Son of God. However, she was still only a woman. Who does Jesus include in His family? (Matthew 12:46-50)

What implication does this have for you?

6. Read John 19:25-30. The unimaginable happens; Jesus died a horrible death before her very eyes. Who was with her?

Who would stand with you in such a trial?

Read Acts 1:12-14

- 7. Besides the disciples and other women, who was with Mary this time? (verse 14)
- 8. What hope did Mary have? (1 Peter 1:3-9)

What hope do you have?

Growing Stronger...

Read Luke 1:46-55. List the attributes of God that you find in this confession of Mary's faith.

Lift Your Heart...

God communicated with Mary once and with her husband Joseph four times concerning His Son, Jesus. God still speaks to us today through His Word, our pastor/teachers, and His "still small voice" in our hearts. But are we available to hear? Name some things that distract you from hearing Him. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Mary of Nazareth

What we know of this godly woman is contained in just a few verses in the Gospel of Luke. Yet, they beautifully portray a woman of strong character and faith who left a lasting impression on those she met. Like many others in this period of history, she was watching expectantly for the Messiah.

Read Luke 2:36-38

- 1. Anna had no husband and no children. How did she spend her time?
- Anna spent time every day in prayer. What do the following verses teach about prayer?
 Philippians 4:6-7

Colossians 4:2-4

Hebrews 4:14-16

James 5:13-16

- What do the following verses say about prayer?
 Jeremiah 33:3
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- 4. How did Anna respond when she saw Jesus?
- 5. Anna devoted her life to worship and prayer. How did this help her to recognize the Child Jesus as her Redeemer?
- 6. Anna was looking for the coming Messiah. What did Jesus tell His disciples in Matthew 24:42-44?

How are **you** watching for Jesus' return?

7. For Anna, the temple was a waiting place as she watched for God's redemption. She had a steadfast hope born of a steadfast faith. What does Psalm 27:14 promise you?

"Strength is often found within the silence, while resting in the presence of the Lord." \sim B. J. Hoff

8. Verse 38 describes Anna as being one of the first evangelists, spreading the Good News of God's redemption. In what ways are you ready to give a testimony of the grace and mercy you have found in Jesus?

Growing Stronger...

Anna served God "with fastings and prayers" (Luke 2:37). There are things you can give up besides food to 'fast' for the Lord. What are some other ways you can create extra time to spend with God?

What do the following verses say about fasting?

Ezra 8:21-23

Joel 2:12

Lift Your Heart...

Anna was a familiar figure in the temple courts. The other women who came to the temple would have known her and perhaps asked for prayer, advice, or a compassionate ear. Thank the Lord for the godly women in your life. Ask Him for an approachable spirit and willingness to reach out to those women around you who need encouragement and love. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Anna

Herodias, granddaughter of Herod the Great, was first married to her uncle, Herod Philip. Lusting for more power, she divorced him and married his brother, Herod Antipas, her other uncle. When John the Baptist spoke openly against this marriage, she revealed the true depths of her depravity.

Read Mark 6:14-29

- 1. What picture in your mind do you have of Herodias?
- 2. Note the different responses to John in verses 19-20. What do these responses tell you about Herod and Herodias?

3. When Herodias was justly confronted with her sin, she responded with anger. How do you respond when you are confronted with a sin?

Describe what the following verses say.

Proverbs 28:13

2 Corinthians 7:10

4. Anger is at the heart of the desire to get even. What do the following verses teach you about anger?

Proverbs 14:29

Proverbs 19:11

Ecclesiastes 7:9

"To be angry is to revenge the faults of others on ourselves." ~ Alexander Pope

- 5. How do you feel when someone is angry with you?
- How does God want you to deal with your anger? Matthew 5:23-24

Ephesians 4:26-27

James 1:19-20

7. What affect do you think the vengeance of Herodias against John the Baptist had on her daughter (verses 24-25) and on her husband (verse 26)?

Growing Stronger...

The lesson we learn from Herodias is that sin will destroy us. But if we repent of our sin, God promises to forgive us and wash us clean by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9). Meditate upon and pray the following Scriptures:

Psalm 32:5

Psalm 103:10-12

Isaiah 1:18

Lift Your Heart...

Being receptive to constructive criticism is an important part of our growth as women of God. It means we are able to see our sins and faults and enter into God's forgiveness and grace. Believing in God's desire to forgive us helps us to repent and change. Perhaps God is using someone to speak the truth to you about something that is not quite right in your life. How are you going to respond? Will you try to make them pay for it by sulking or holding a grudge? Spend some quiet time with the Lord and ask Him to reveal to you the truth of their words. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Herodias	

The Canaanite Woman... A Persistent Plea

This nameless woman was a Gentile pagan, yet Jesus commended her for her faith. It took courage for this woman to approach Jesus and her persistence was rewarded.

Read Matthew 15:21-28

- 1. Jesus and His disciples traveled to Tyre and Sidon. Look at the maps in the back of your Bible and find where they went.
- 2. How did this woman approach Jesus? (Matthew 15:22, Mark 7:25)

What does that tell you of her attitude toward Him?

- 3. What did she want Jesus to do for her?
- 4. How did Jesus respond to her request?

How did she respond to Him?

- 5. Have you ever been in a situation where you were desperate but it didn't seem like God was hearing your prayers? What was your response?
- 6. Read 1 Peter 5:6-7. What does God want you to do and why?

"The only way to learn strong faith is to endure great trials." ~ George Mueller

7. What did Jesus do for her?

Why?

8. How does the Canaanite woman's perseverance encourage you?

9. Write Romans 10:11-12 in your own words.

How did Jesus portray this truth to His disciples in this situation?

Growing Stronger...

Jesus reached out to Gentiles who sought Him out on several occasions. Read Luke 7:1-10. List some similarities and differences in the stories of the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion.

Similarities

Differences

Lift Your Heart...

This Canaanite woman came to Jesus in desperate circumstances and with courageous faith. When it seemed that Jesus might not help, she persevered rather than just giving up. Sometimes God tests our faith to strengthen it and so that we can see that it is genuine. It is never pleasant when it is happening, but what an encouragement to us and to others when it is done. Ask God to help you keep your faith strong, and to give you courage to persevere and not give up in times of testing. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for the Canaanite Woman

Mary had lived her life in the shadows fighting the demons that controlled her. Jesus rescued her from darkness and she devoted herself to ministering to His needs. Mary followed Him for three years. When Jesus died on that horrible cross, it seemed as if the Light of her life had been snuffed out. But God had a bright dawn in store for her.

- 1. What does Luke 8:1-3 say about Mary?
- 2. Although Mary is mentioned 14 times in Scripture, she is never once referred to as a prostitute, yet that is how she is often portrayed. There are always people around us who are different. Perhaps they stand on a traffic median and beg or walk down the street talking to someone you can't see. Can you think of someone like that? What are your first thoughts when you see them?

How can you truly help them in that moment? (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

- 3. The Gospel record shows that there were different kinds of demon possession. (See Matthew 8:28, 9:33, and Luke 9:39) Why do you think the exact nature of Mary's demon possession is not revealed?
- 4. Read Luke 8:1-3. In what specific ways do you suppose the women helped Jesus?

How can you support your spiritual leaders?

"Take your eyes and your ears and your hands and your feet and your thoughts and your heart: Give them completely and unreservedly to Christ." ~ Billy Graham

Read Mark 15:22-41

5. What might Mary have been thinking and feeling as this brutality toward the Man who rescued her was taking place?

- 6. What do you think gave her the strength to go to the crucifixion?
- 7. Read Luke 23:50-56. Jesus was dead and buried, yet Mary was still there. Describe the continued devotion of the women toward Jesus.
- 8. What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us?

How was Mary rewarded? (Mark 16:9)

9. Mary's devotion to Jesus was self-sacrificing. List some ways you can be sacrificial in your devotion to Jesus.

Growing Stronger...

Mary had a conversation with Jesus that lasted several minutes before she recognized Him. It was when Jesus spoke her name that she knew Him. Consider the following Scriptures. What do they say about your name?

Isaiah 43:1

Isaiah 43:7

John 10:3-4

Revelation 2:17

Lift Your Heart...

We all have areas where shadows of discouragement and fear lurk. This week, set your alarm for a few minutes before dawn and find a quiet place where you can watch the sunrise. In the darkness, tell Jesus about those things that cause shadows in your life. Perhaps it's a troubled relationship, an addiction, a financial situation, or an illness. As the sun rises think of the light on the morning of the resurrection and remember that when Jesus walked out of that tomb, you walked out with Him! As you rejoice in the Light of His love, let His Spirit drive all your shadows away. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Mary Magdalene

Sapphira's name means "beautiful", 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that God doesn't look at the outward appearance, but at the heart, where people cannot see. In the days of laying the foundation of the church, God did not allow the stones of pride and deceit to be built onto the chief cornerstone, His Son Jesus.

Read Acts 4:32-5:11

- 1. What were some characteristics of the early church in Jerusalem? (Acts 4:32-33)
- 2. Acts 4:34-37 tells of the Holy Spirit at work and grace abounding in the community. What did Barnabas do that demonstrated the outpouring of this grace?
- 3. In Acts 5:1-2, what three things do you learn about Sapphira and her husband?
- 4. In Acts 5:3-4, what did Peter tell Ananias?
- 5. In Psalm 51:4, how did David view his sin?
- 6. Did it matter that Sapphira and Ananias held some of their money back?

Why did they lie about it?

7. Sapphira conspired with her husband to lie. What do the following verses say about lying?

Proverbs 12:22

Colossians 3:9-10

"The most important thing you must decide to do each and every day is to put the Lord first." ~ Elizabeth George

- 8. Sapphira and Ananias wanted to be like Barnabas, but how were they different? (See also Acts 11:22-24)
- 9. In Acts 5:7-8, Peter gave Sapphira a chance to tell the truth. Why did he do that? (1 Corinthians 10:13)

How did Sapphira respond and what was the result?

10. What was the reaction of the church? (verse 11)

Why was the long-term effect? (Acts 19:17)

Growing Stronger...

Wives have a responsibility to seek God, pray for their husbands, and give godly counsel. Sapphira certainly didn't seem to do this! What do the following verses teach about a wife's role and responsibilities?

Genesis 2:18

Ephesians 5:22

Ephesians 5:33

Titus 2:3-5

1 Peter 3:1-2

Lift Your Heart...

The world we live in pushes us constantly to compromise. Yet we each have a conscience which lets us know when we are sinning. We are without excuse. The only way we can ignore our conscience is to harden our heart to the Holy Spirit. The deeper we sink into sin, the harder our heart becomes. Ask God to give you the strength and determination to obey when His Holy Spirit speaks to you. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Sapphira

Dorcas, ("gazelle, graceful"), has the distinction of being the only woman in Scripture to be specifically called a "disciple" of Jesus. A disciple is more than a pupil. A disciple follows in such a way that they adopt the views, opinions, and even the lifestyle of their master. Dorcas had her Master's compassion and generous nature; she glorified Him in her daily living.

Read Acts 9:36-43

- 1. What acts of kindness did Dorcas do?
- 2. What are some practical ways you can imitate Dorcas?
- What do the following verses say about being disciple of Christ? Matthew 16:24-27

Mark 12:29-31

John 8:31-32

John 13:34-35

4. According to Acts 9:37-38, what were they expecting Peter to do?

5. When you pray, what do you expect God to do?

6. Considering Philippians 1:21-24, how might Dorcas have felt about being raised from the dead?

7. How was God glorified by her resurrection? (Acts 9:42)

Growing Stronger...

God is glorified in the story of Dorcas not only in her being raised from the dead, but also in the way she poured out her life in service to others. You do not have to do great and difficult things to honor God. He will be glorified by your love in action. Meditate and comment on the following verses. Prayerfully consider how God wants to use you to bless others.

Proverbs 14:31

Jeremiah 22:15-16

Matthew 6:3-4

1Timothy 2:9-10

"Work for some good, be it ever so slowly; Cherish some flower, be it ever so lowly; Labor—all labor is noble and holy; Let thy great deeds be thy prayer to thy God." ~ Pearl

Lift Your Heart...

There are countless people like Dorcas who serve the Lord Jesus through their willingness to give of themselves and they have neither fame nor fortune to show for it. No act of kindness, however small, is hidden from the eyes of Him who sees all. Can you remember something someone did for you that touched you in a special way? Record your thoughts in your journal. Now, pass that kindness on!

Study notes for Dorcas

God seeks women who will love, honor, and follow Him. In our studies, we have seen Him use Rahab the harlot, Ruth the Moabitess, a Canaanite woman, and now a Samaritan woman. None were Jewish, but all were women with strong faith. The world wouldn't have chosen these women to further the kingdom of God, but He did. Jesus was more concerned with people than with traditions, societal 'norms', or appearances.

Read John 4:1-42

- 1. In verse 4, why was it was necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria?
- 2. Jesus was tired as He spoke with the Samaritan woman, but that did not keep Him from speaking the truth to her. How is this an example for you? (2 Timothy 4:2)
- 3. What do you remember about your first encounter with Jesus?
- 4. Who are the 'Samaritans' in your life, people you have traditionally stayed away from for one reason or another?

What lesson from this story could you use as you approach them?

"A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might be even more difficult to save." ~ C.S. Lewis

- 5. How did Jesus start the conversation with the Samaritan woman?
- 6. Describe the water that Jesus gives. (See verses 13-14)

- 7. In verses 16-18, Jesus described the life of this woman. The Samaritans were no less pious or strict than the Jews. How would the people of this town have felt about this woman?
- 8. Why did the people of the town listen to her? (See verses 28-30)
- 9. Using verses 39-42, describe what happened to this town.

Growing Stronger...

Jesus broke with tradition by speaking with this woman and by staying in this Samaritan town. He was not concerned about social status or appearance. He was concerned about souls in need of salvation and wanted to bring hope and healing to hearts open to His saving grace. This was not unusual for Him. In the following verses, what are some other ways Jesus showed this concern?

Matthew 8:1-4

Luke 7:36-50

Luke 13:10-17

John 8:2-11

Lift Your Heart...

Like Jesus, we too need to have love and concern for the outcasts of society. You only need to share your own testimony, what the Lord has done in your life, and then invite them to see 'for themselves'. Write a 2-3 minute testimony to share with someone that God brings your way.

Study notes for the Samaritan Woman

Lydia was the first convert in Asia. Not only was her ear open to the gospel, but her heart was open as well. Lydia was not saved by good works, but she was saved to do them. She proved the reality of her faith by opening her home to Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy.

Read Acts 16:11-15, and 40

- 1. What are some things you learn about Lydia?
- 2. In verses 13-14, what was Paul doing?

What was Lydia doing?

What did God do?

3. Read Luke 24:33-36, 44-45. What did Jesus do for His disciples?

 Verse 14 says that Lydia was a worshiper of God. Her response to Paul's words shows that she was ready for more. What do the following verses say about seeking God? Deuteronomy 4:29 Psalm 63:1

Hebrews 11:6

5. As you seek God, you can know Him through His word. What do the following verses declare about the Word of God?

Matthew 4:4

Colossians 3:16

Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 1:23

6. In Acts 16:15, what did Lydia do as soon as she believed?

Have you been baptized? Why or Why not?

7. Lydia invited Paul and the others to stay at her house. Why is hospitality important? (Mark 9:41, Hebrews 13:2)

8. Have you ever had an opportunity to host a missionary to either stay with you or join you for a meal? If so, what was that like? If not, would you like to?

Growing Stronger...

Read Acts 16:19-40. In verses 22-24, what happened to Paul and Silas?

Read Philippians 1:27-29. Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Philippi. What did Paul say to them?

Paul went back to Lydia's after he was released from prison and encouraged the believers there. In light of their current persecution, how would Paul's own experience in Philippi encouraged them?

Lift Your Heart...

There are many believers whom God has sent out around the world to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is often difficult to be far from family and friends. This week, consider getting the name of a missionary you can be praying for and then send them a note or an email. Let them know that you are praying for them and that they are not forgotten. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Study notes for Lydia	

~ Friends, Prayer Requests... ~

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." - Hebrews 13:8