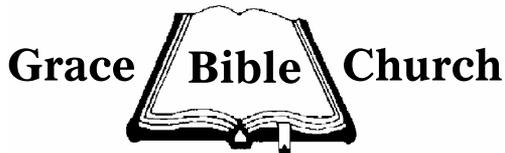


Studies for Women

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Speaking the Truth in Love

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DEDICATION

The sole purpose of this book is to bring honor and glory to our Wonderful Lord and Saviour. May it be of some small help to His children through the teaching of His Word.

Dedicated to:

All the ladies who have attended the Ladies
Bible Class through the past 40 years

and

To my own girls:
Janie and Laura
Janemarie, Ashley, Lindsey
and little Catherine.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago I was asked to speak to a group of ladies. The subject given to me was, "Women of the 90's." When I started thinking on this, I wondered, Are things different now for women, than back in the 50's or 60's or other years? I thought of verses in the Bible that tell us the Lord is the same "yesterday, today, and forever." I thought of other verses that teach us that His Word abides forever. And yet, are things in our daily life the same as they always were? Are things in this world the same? Are problems always the same? I began to question if mothers today had the same problems and answers as I had several years ago when I was raising my children. When we think of the two sides of this question, it will seem that there is a contradiction; but not really. We see that our Wonderful Lord and His Word certainly do not change; however, things in this world certainly have changed.

Satan is consistent in his work. He has always tempted all mankind, especially the children of God. However, we would have to say that things in the world certainly have changed very much. Sin is more accepted today. Immoral things are accepted and become a part of society or the culture. One difference is that many do not want to call the actions of people today with its correct name, "sin!" Sin is called "mistakes" or "diseases," etc. Certainly many things are acceptable today as just being the norm, when they are really wrong and are sinful and immoral. Today, it is even hard to allow children to see the news broadcasts. Also some advertisements that come into our homes, would have been called pornography a few years back. Old Satan is always there to use anything he can to war against the home, the church, and especially against our Lord and His Word, whatever the age.

God's formula for Christian families has not changed. Perhaps some of the battles today are different, but the answers come from our Lord and His Word.

In Psalms 127:1 we read, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it ..." This is as true today

as the day it was spoken. If our homes are to stand, it must be the Lord that is building through godly mothers and fathers. This principle also could apply to our lives. If we don't let the Holy Spirit lead in all things, we certainly shall fail and fall.

Satan is surely directing his work toward the home and the church. These are both given to us as from the Lord. Satan will fight against anything that is of our Lord. Many well meaning people play right into the hands of Satan in trying to disrupt any home life. Our government sometimes, meaning to be of help, is only furthering the breaking down of home life.

A Christian friend talked to me one day about their church having something every night. Not all the family went each night, but each night was some activity for one of more members of her family—the men one night, the ladies another, and then different activities for the different ages of the children. She was upset that they never had a night when all the family could be together for a family night at home. Their evening meal was always rushed so that some of the family could get to the church. One of the parents had to rush off to take the children, and then go back to get them. Yes, even some “good” things sometimes can hinder a good Christian home-life. Satan surely takes advantage of all things.

Beginning with these thoughts, then, we are going to look into these “Studies for Women” from the Word.

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

ALL SCRIPTURE IS FOR EVERYONE

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16)

As we see in our Scripture quoted above, all Scripture is for us and is profitable to us. As we study the Word, we must realize this and study all the Bible. However, we must also see that not all Scripture is directed to us, as far as practice for today. For instance, much of the Scriptures were written directly to the nation of Israel; most of Paul's epistles are written directly to the Church, the Body of Christ. Also, for our study, we will see that some Scripture is directed to women, and some is directed to men. One caution here that we must recognize is that much of the time when “man” is used, it is speaking of the human race, including everyone—men and women. This is what we want to look at in this study. Before we can truly understand what the Lord wants us as women to do, we must first know some of the wonderful doctrine that He gives to everyone. For instance, what about,

God's Plan for Our Salvation

*Scripture Reading: Romans 3:22-23, 5:12, 6:23;
1 Peter 2:24; John 3:14-19; Ephesians 2:8-9*

In Romans 3:22-23 we read, “... there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” We can readily see that these verses are to everyone—men and women. We are all sinners, born in sin. Therefore we have a need for a Saviour. In John 3:16, we are told, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The world here is all the people of the world, which in-

cludes men and women. Before we can go forward in seeing what the Lord would have us as women to do, we must first come to Him for salvation. “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). In order to study His Word, in order to live for Him, we must first have Him as our Saviour. This is a free gift, we just must believe and receive the gift of eternal life, by accepting Him and what He did on the cross for each of us. When we are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Then He will lead us through the Word how we can go forward in our,

Living for Him

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-17; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:1, 5:2, 8,15; Galatians 6:1; Romans 12:13

In Colossians 3, we find many wonderful truths teaching us how to live. In verse 1, we can see to whom the Lord is speaking. He is speaking to those that are “risen with Christ.” When we have accepted Him as Saviour, we have not only died with Him, but are risen with Him. This is to all saved people--men and women. To live for Him, we must seek those things which are above, and set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Too many times we have our minds (and hearts) on things of this life. We are told in Col. 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” If our thoughts and affection are on things above, we can do our daily living for Him and in His Name. Even some tasks that we might not like to do can become a blessing if we are doing them in His Name. In this chapter we are told many things that we walked in before we were saved. Now we should be dead to these things. We are told in verses 9 and 10 that we should put off the “old man: and put on the “new man.” In verses 12-14, we are told what we should “put on”

after putting off the things of the flesh. Verse 15 tells us to let the peace of God rule in our hearts, and to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.

In the Scripture references above in Galatians and Ephesians, we are told how to walk. We are to walk in the Spirit, not thinking of the fleshly “wants” or “desires” so much, but let the Holy Spirit lead us in spiritual things. These Scriptures also tell us to walk in love, to walk in the light, to walk worthy and to walk circumspectly (watching, looking around, watching for Satan's attempts to disrupt). In Romans 12:1-3, we are told to “present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” We are told in verse 2, not to be conformed to this world “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” I ask all who are studying with us, to reread all the above Scriptures prayerfully, and meditate on these things in order to live for Him.

One thing that can make it possible for us to live for the Lord and for our life to be a blessing is **love**.

LOVE

*Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:3; Deuteronomy 6:5;
Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:7-19; 1 Corinthians 13*

We find in Jeremiah 31:3, "... I have loved thee with an everlasting love." This is the type of love the Lord has always had for mankind. This has been shown throughout all the Scriptures. When Christ died on the cross, we see the fulness of this love. To think that He loved us with an everlasting love! In the 1 John reference above, we are told, "... If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." With this kind of love from Him, it is no wonder that we are told to love Him with all our heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:5). This is brought over and repeated in Luke 10:27. We can find a complete study of love in 1 John 4 and 1 Corinthians 13. In 1 Corinthians 13 we have a complete description of what love is and what love isn't. In 1 John 4:7 we are told to love one another. When we love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind, He can help us to love others. Verse 8 tells us that those who do not love, do not know God. Verse 9 tells us how much God loved us (read it). In this chapter, we also see that **God is love**. We are also told how our love is made perfect and the privileges we have because of it (verses 17-18). Read all of the verses from this chapter referenced above and see how we too can "speak the truth in love." As women, we can easily carry out what our Lord has for us to do if we have this love in our hearts. Another way we can see His love to us is in the fact that we are accepted in Him.

ACCEPTED IN HIM

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Eph. 1:6)

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” (2 Cor. 5:9)

What a wonderful blessing to be accepted by Him; and to be accepted in Him. Our heavenly Father sees us in His Son, and accepts us because of what the Son did for us.

*God sees my Saviour,
And then He sees me
In the Beloved
I am happy and free.*

SCRIPTURES DIRECTED TO WOMEN (AS WIVES)

*Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:16, Colossians 3:18,17,23,
Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Corinthians 7:3*

In Genesis 3:13 and 16, we find the first record of God speaking directly to Eve. He had spoken to Adam and Eve before, telling them that they were to be “fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” He also told them to have dominion over all the created beings. We are also told in Gen. 2:15 that God took the man and put him in the garden and gave instructions that they could eat of every tree of the garden, except one. God did give full instructions of what He expected of the man and woman. However, this Scripture in Gen. 3:13 and 16 is the first time we see God directly speaking to Eve.

God had already directed a question to Adam concerning their disobedience. Adam had blamed the woman (and maybe indirectly blamed God). In verse 13, God asked Eve, “What is this that thou hast done?” The woman also blamed someone else—the serpent.

Our righteous God knew exactly what had happened. He put judgment on all concerned. For our study on women, we see in Genesis 3:16, God spoke directly to Eve.

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

God put the judgment on Eve and then told her that her husband would rule over her. This has been God's plan for man and wife throughout the ages. In Paul's writings to the Church today, we still find this. In Colossians 3:18, we read,

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,

as it is fit in the Lord.”

In this same portion of Scripture the message goes on to husbands, children, fathers, and servants. Each are to fulfill what the Lord has for them to do. All are to take the 17th verse which is written to all believers,

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Wives, as they submit to their husbands, should be doing it all (in word or deed) in the name of the Lord Jesus. Husbands, as they take the headship of the home and love their wives, should be doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Verse 23 of this same chapter says,

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men:”

Here again is the perfect plan of God. Our relationship with our husbands should be from our hearts, and as unto the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 7:3 we read,

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto the husband.”

The word “benevolence” means to promote the prosperity and happiness of others; be kind and charitable. The husband should be thinking of what is best for the wife, and the wife should be thinking of what is best for the husband.

In the last text in our Scripture reading, Ephesians 5:21-33, we have our best explanation of the wife-husband relationship. This portion of Scripture is used a lot at weddings. (I hope you will take time to read all this portion). It starts off by saying, “Submitting yourselves on to another” Then verse 22 tells the wives to submit unto their own husbands “as unto the Lord.” As His children, we desire to be in His will. His

will for wives is to submit unto their own husbands. Then the rest of the portion is comparing a husband's relationship to the wife, with Christ's relationship to His church. He tells us that He is giving a great mystery concerning Christ and the church, and yet every man should love his wife, "even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it."

There could be no problem for the wife nor the husband fulfilling exactly what the Lord intends if each would take these Scriptures from the Lord and obey them.

These Scriptures we have studied, that are directed to wives (and husbands), show the ideal relationship. There is much joy and peace and happiness in this type of relationship. We know that Christ, as Head of the Church, never shows Himself as a Dictator. Wives who are saved and desire to be in the will of the Lord, will find pleasure in being submissive and loving their husbands and working together to be of help to them.

I know some are saying "yes, but what if my husband isn't doing his part?" This we will take up in a future lesson.

SCRIPTURES DIRECTED TO WOMEN (AS MOTHERS)

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:4-8, Titus 2:3-5

“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” (2 Tim. 1:5)

The apostle Paul was writing his second letter to Timothy. Timothy was very dear to the apostle Paul. He was writing to encourage him to continue in the faith and be faithful to give out the Word which Paul had taught him. Paul was urging Timothy to carry on the message that the Lord had given them to preach. He started this instruction by reminding him of what he had been taught by his mother and grandmother. What a tribute to them! This is the privilege that the Lord gives all mothers. That is, teaching the Word to the children and letting the children see the faith in them. There is no higher calling than to minister to children. If children can accept the Lord as Saviour and begin to grow in the Word, then their lives can be saved as well as their souls. There is no one that can minister to children more than a mother. How fortunate Timothy was to have a faithful grandmother and mother.

Every mother should realize the responsibility, privilege, and blessing of “training up a child in the way he should go.”

Throughout the Scriptures we find the importance of mothers in the lives of their children. Some mother's influences were evil. For example, we read in 1 Kings 22:52-53 and 2 Chronicles 22:1-4 concerning King Ahaziah. His mother was Athaliah. These Scriptures tell us that she “was his counsellor to do wickedly.” She was ambitious for her son, and wanted to influence him in reigning over the country. Even today there are some mothers who get too anxious for their children to succeed in something, or be the best in some particular thing. Sometimes this leads to evil counseling. Some mother's influ-

ence caused the children to do good. It certainly behooves us as mothers to recognize that there is no greater work for us to do for the Lord than to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We read in Titus chapter 2 some important teachings to older men, younger men, older women and younger women. For our study on women, we will look at verses 3-5 in this second chapter of Titus.

“The aged women, likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

How many things do you see that the aged women should be doing? We see in verse 3 that there are four things listed for older women. Then in verses 4-5, we see eight things listed for the younger women. Remembering that what we “do” teaches as much or more than what we say, we must realize that all twelve of the listed things would be what the older women should be practicing. We must be doing these things ourselves in order to be able to teach the younger women.

Younger women must realize that this is God's message to them. Study the meaning of each of these words or phrases in these verses and pray that you can truly be this type of wife and mother. The word “discreet” means to show discernment or good judgment in conduct, and in speech. As women we need to use good judgment in dealing with our husbands and children, as well as with others. We need to “grow up” and “mature” if we want to be of help to others. The word “chaste” carries the meaning of innocent of unlawful sexual relations; virtuous; pure in thought and act; pure and simple in design and expressions. Our lives need to be pure and simple, filled with the love of the Lord. We should not want to draw atten-

tion to ourselves, but rather let others see the **Lord** through us.

There is no happier life in this world than one that truly wants to be in the will of the Lord. This is his will for older and younger women. Even the Lord Jesus when here on this earth said that He came to do the complete will of the Heavenly Father. If we, as women, want to please the Lord, and bring much joy and happiness to our own lives, we must be in the will of the Lord. Only as we yield to His plan for our lives can we experience the joy and peace that passes human understanding. In this way, we can be blessed and can be a blessing to our husbands, children, and all that our lives will touch.

DRESS AND CONDUCT

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 2:9-10 1 Peter 3:1-5

In these Scriptures we will see two issues concerning women. In the first place, we read concerning the,

Dress for Women

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.” (1 Tim. 2:9)

Some religious groups have made this a doctrine for their women. They should wear no jewelry, no broided or beautifying of the hair, and no costly clothing. Before going further into this, let us turn to 1 Peter 3 in our Bibles. In verse 1 we see this is addressed to “ye wives,” and in verse three (we will come back to verses 1 and 2 later), we read,

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.”

Like 1 Timothy 2:9, this has been misused in many religions. In both instances it is not saying these things can never be worn, but in both verses it tells us this should not be used for “adorning.” If the verse in 1 Peter 3:3 was taken literally, we would have to say it was saying that women should not put on apparel! In both Scriptures we find the word “adorning.” In 1 Peter we read, “Whose adorning let it not be...,” and in 1 Timothy 2:9 it says, that the women “adorn themselves in modest apparel....” In verse 10 of 1 Timothy 2, it says,

“But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

In other words don't get our minds fixed on the outward beauty, but rather let it be the beauty of good (or godly) works. Then in 1 Peter 3, after saying "whose adorning, let it not be ...," verse 4 says,

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price."

Both verses are speaking of women being modest, and not using outward appearances, but rather using the life of good works, or godly works, which come from the new creation that we are in Christ. The desires for the beauty of the flesh come from the old person we were before being saved. Now we have the new nature that the Lord has given us, and this should be our "adorning."

The Hidden One of the Heart

The second thing that we can learn from these Scriptures is the question that came up in a previous lesson. "What if the husband doesn't take his place that God meant for him to have?"

The Scripture here in 1 Peter 3 helps to answer that, too. Going back to verse 1, we read,

"Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they may also without the word be won by the behaviour (conduct) of the wives."

This portion of Scripture could be speaking about unsaved husbands, or it could be saved husbands who do not study the Word. They can be won as they see Christ and His Word through the wife. They can be won when they see the beauty

of the hidden man (the new creation) in the life of the wife.

These Scriptures clearly teach much more than how some people want to use them. They show the importance of our putting the emphasis on spiritual things. If we can just “present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God which is our reasonable service,” we can see how the Lord can use us. Wives who have husbands who are not saved, should use this “hidden man of the heart” as a means to win their husbands. Remember you want to draw him to the Lord, not just to yourself. When we are tempted to put emphasis on the beautifying of the body, let's remember the little chorus,

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity
Oh, Thou Spirit divine
All my nature refine
Until the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

WOMEN IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:12

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20)

This Scripture is speaking to those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. That is seeing and believing in their hearts that Christ died for their sin. Every saved person is an ambassador for Him. This is for women as well as men. We are all ambassadors for Him, to represent Him here in this life.

However, the Lord has laid out different ministries for men and women to be carried out here on this earth. Our first Scripture reading, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, is often misunderstood. Some have taken this to mean that a woman should not utter a word, be mute. The word “silence” here means quietness. This is translated as “quietness” in 2 Thessalonians. 3:12.

As we have seen in previous lessons, women are told to show forth the hidden one of the heart, even “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price” (1 Pet. 3:1-3). Also, women are to be in “behaviour as becoming holiness” (Titus 2:3-5). This should be our attitude in the work of the Lord. The explanation of 1 Timothy 2:11, when it is said for “women to learn in silence and subjection,” is fully explained in the very next verse.

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (1 Tim. 2:12)

Women then as ambassadors for the Lord, are not to take the lead or places of authority over the men in the work of the Lord. This would include the fact that women are not to be pastors over congregations. I believe the Scripture is perfectly

clear that the men are to take the leadership in the services of the Lord.

Now let's look at many of the wonderful things the Lord has given us, as women, the privilege of doing. We have already seen in other lessons, how women can teach and help "train up a child in the way he should go." This would be our own children, but also other children. Many women have given their lives to this ministry—teaching classes of boys and girls, having mid-week Bible Classes for children, teaching in Vacation Bible Schools and Bible camps, etc. This is not only a privilege, but a responsibility that women have. What a blessing! Women can be teachers of other women, filling the great need of helping younger women to see their responsibilities to their own children and to others. The church and the home should surely be working together in this. However we find that children are in the home, under parents guidance, as much as 83% of their "growing-up years." These same statistics will show that they are in worship services only about 1% and in the schools about 16%. Surely there are some years where our greatest "service" for the Lord would be in our homes.

There are many other ways that women can serve in the work of the Lord. Music is a great ministry which many women do in the work of the Lord. I have been blessed also to see how many women quietly minister to the elderly, widows, the sick, and others. Women have worked as volunteers in the office of the churches, helping with mail-outs, etc. There is no end to the ministry we all can have if we observe Colossians 3:17 and 23,

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col. 3:17)

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." (Col. 3:23)

EVE

*Scripture Reading: Genesis 1-4, Romans 5:12-21,
1 Timothy 2:13-15, 2 Corinthians 11:3*

As we begin looking into the women of the Bible, it seems logical for us to begin with the first woman, Eve. We find most of the information that we have about Eve in the first 4 chapters of Genesis. The other Scriptures listed in the Scripture reading for this lesson, give us insight into the study of Eve.

In Genesis 1:26-28, we find the record of man being created. God had created the beautiful world and a very special garden. It must have been more beautiful than we can imagine. There was no sin and no pollution!

The water of the rivers were pure, the soil was perfect, and the air unpolluted! After a provision for a perfect dwelling place, God made man and woman. We notice in these three verses that He created both male and female, placed them in the beautiful garden and told them to “be fruitful and multiply.” In chapter 2, we see the explanation of how they were created. Genesis 2:7 tells us that God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. In verses 21-22 of chapter 2, we see the first operation performed. God caused a deep sleep to come to Adam, and took a rib and made the woman. In verse 23 we see that Adam called her “woman.” This prefix means, “taken out of.” Eve was made from a part taken out of Adams body. It is not until after the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, that Adam named his wife “Eve.” Eve means mother of all living. Eve certainly was different from any other woman that has ever lived in this world in many ways. She was created--not born. She was never a baby or even a child. She had no parents.

We really do not know how long a time or short a time that Adam and Eve lived in the Garden. We do know that by chapter 3 the beautiful, subtil, deceiving serpent came to Eve. We

can learn much if we spend time in studying what went on between Eve and the serpent. Read it again and again, and notice how the serpent began to change God's Word. Notice how the woman began to doubt and even seems to add to God's Word. Finally we see the serpent outright deny God's Word! He said, "you will not surely die." In I John 2:16-17, we find one definition for sin—"the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life." This describes Eve here in the garden. She looked upon the forbidden fruit and saw that it was pleasant to the eyes, that it was good for food, and that it would make her wise (make her to know evil as well as good). She experienced the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. How often does this happen to many of us today? Satan still uses these tactics to tempt Christians today.

We know the results of her obeying Satan instead of obeying the words of God. We know that judgments were passed out to the man, to the serpent, and to the woman. In verse 16 of chapter 3, is the first time God tells the woman that the man would "rule over you." Bearing children is a wonderful blessing; it was the sorrow and pain that went with the bearing of children that was a part of God's judgment.

We don't have a direct answer to the question of where was Adam when this happened between Eve and the serpent. He could have been with her and heard the conversation between the two. We do know that in verse 6 of chapter three it says that Eve took the fruit and did eat and gave to her husband "with her" and he did eat. He certainly was with her for the act of disobedience.

God surely had to deal differently with Adam and Eve now. They were different—they were sinners. But what a gracious God we have! In Genesis 3:15, we find the first mention and promise of the Saviour! God speaks of the seed of Satan and the Seed of the Woman. In the very next chapter, we see that Adam and Eve had their first son, Cain. Eve seemed delighted, and some think she may have thought this to be the Man who would be the Saviour. She exclaimed, "I have gotten a (the) man from the Lord." In any case, we see that Eve be-

lieved God, and knew that all blessings came from Him.

After Cain, Eve had another son, Abel. Though she seemed blessed, and was very happy, we can see the results of the sin nature in what happened to these two boys. We know that they both were taught to bring forth a blood sacrifice to God. This sacrifice was to picture the Lamb of God who would come to be the Saviour of mankind. God would not have held Cain responsible for the right sacrifice had this not been taught to him. However, we know Cain refused to bring the right sacrifice, wanting to bring the works of his own hands instead of the lamb offering. Because Cain refused to obey God, his offering was refused. We know what happened. Cain, through hatred and jealousy, killed his brother Abel.

Yes, Eve had learned both good and evil, but oh! the heartache it cost her. Because of the sin nature, she lost both of her sons. It is hard for a mother to lose two sons, but when one is the murderer of the other, it must be very hard to go through. I wonder if Eve thought back to when she disobeyed God. It is interesting to note that in the Faith chapter of Hebrews 11, we find many of the faithful people listed. However, Eve is not mentioned. Her son, Abel, however is the first one mentioned. However God was there for Eve and gave her a blessing in giving her another son, Seth.

We often remember Eve for her sin and disobedience to God and His Word. However, we can get a lesson from her later life in seeing her faith and belief in God and His Word, and how she taught her children. Seth is in the human genealogy of our Lord in Luke 3:38.

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

*Scripture Reading: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; Isaiah 7:14;
Matthew 1:16,18-25; Luke 1:27-Luke 3; Luke 1:46-55;
John 19:25-28; Galatians 4:4-5*

There are at least 6 “Mary’s” listed in the books given above for our reading. The mother of Jesus is always identified for us in the Scriptures. Most of the time she is called, “Mary, mother of Jesus.” Or sometimes when she is called just “Mary,” it will be told in further Scriptures that she was the mother of Jesus.

We mentioned in our study of Eve, that Eve was different from any other woman that ever lived. Eve was created and therefore never was a baby or a child, and she never had parents. Mary was like all other women. She was a baby, a child and an adult. The thing that is different about Mary, is that God used her in a special way—different from any other person. No one will ever be used in the same way that Mary was. She certainly received a special blessing; however, she was a human being like all the rest of us. She was born just as everyone has been born, with the exception of Adam and Eve.

We don’t find Mary’s name mentioned in the Old Testament however, in Isaiah 7:14 we read,

*“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and
shall call his name Immanuel.”*

She is mentioned in Old Testament prophecies, but always just as a virgin. It was not the time to reveal who the virgin would be.

We can find references about Mary in all the four gospels, especially in the book of Luke. In Luke 1:26-27 we find this stated,

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent

from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary."

The following verses in Luke tell us that the angel brought her a message. First she was told that she was "highly favoured and blessed among women." Mary at first was startled and probably somewhat fearful at such a greeting. The angel told her not to fear and that she had found favor with God. Then she was told she would bring forth a child and call His name "Jesus" (Saviour) and He shall be the Son of the Highest! Mary began to question how this could be when she wasn't even married and had never been with a man. Then the angel answered her in verse 35.

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Even though Mary probably did not understand all things, her answer shows a complete surrender to the Lord.

"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:38)

No other woman will ever be asked to do what Mary did. No other woman would have this privilege. However, we are told in Romans 12:1,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

We, today should yield ourselves completely to the Lord to be used for His glory in our bodies throughout our life on earth.

Mary had many experiences through her years of raising the child Jesus. As we read the Scriptures above, we see that many times she “pondered these things in her heart,” or she “kept these things in her heart.” The Lord Jesus asking questions and giving answers when He was left at Jerusalem, the miracles He performed, the life of service to the Father, gave Mary many things to think about in her heart. However, she showed her faith and belief in Jesus and in His power telling the servants, “Whatsoever He says unto you, do it.” She knew He had all power and could do all things. If we see this, we should take heed to that little phrase, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” We should look into the Scripture to see what He says for us today, and do it.

Sometimes people think that the Lord was rude, or didn't speak to Mary in the right way. I don't believe He ever spoke in a harsh way to Mary, but rather He was separating Himself from this earth to “finish the work that the Father gave Him to do.” I believe that Mary must have seen this. Read Mary's reaction each time the Lord spoke to her. Notice that we are told in Luke 2:51,

“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them; but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”

Even as a child growing up He was obedient and in subjection to His parents. He was respectful and showed concern and compassion for His mother, even on the cross of Calvary. One of the times that He spoke, when on the cross, was to Mary, His earthly mother. He said in John 19:27-28,

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the

disciple, behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

After the death of Christ, we read about Mary in the book of Acts chapter 1. In verses 13-14, we see the disciples, and Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brethren, together in an upper room to pray.

One of the last times we find Mary mentioned (not by name) is in Galatians 4:4,

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Yes, God was able to use Mary in a very special and blessed way. Not because she was more divine than any one else, but because she had faith in His Word. She also obeyed and gave herself to be used of God. Mary is not God. Mary is not our Intercessor. We do not pray to Mary. We do not worship Mary. The Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and God the Son. He is the one that we go through to reach the Father. However, we know that Mary was highly favoured and blessed of the Lord.

SHE GAVE HER ALL

Scripture Reading: Mark 12:41-47, Luke 21:1-4

As we study the Women of the Bible, we find some that have only a few verses written about them. Many times their names are not even given. The Lord has told us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Therefore, we can receive a lesson even from the smallest account.

In our Scripture Reading we read about a widow. This is all we know about her. However, the Lord used her to teach a lesson to his disciples—and to us today. Jesus was sitting near the treasury, and noticed rich men casting in large amounts. Then the poor widow came by and cast in two mites. A mite was the smallest of coins. However, we see in Mark 12:43 that the Lord called his disciples and said unto them,

“Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

The rich people were giving a part of what they had left over after all their own needs were fulfilled. The poor widow gave all that she had. We are told in Colossians 3:17,

“And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

We should dedicate all that we have to our Lord. We should do everything in His Name and for His glory. If we dedicate our children to Him, and use our possessions to care for them and provide their needs, this is giving to Him. We are

told to first give our own selves to Him. We are told to present our bodies to Him. The way in which we use what the Lord has provided is what is important. We know that it takes money to carry on the work of the Lord and give out His Word. We should be willing to share what we have. If we live our lives for Him, and do everything in His Name and for His glory, we will be giving our all to Him.

I wonder if the Lord could say of any of us today, “She gave her all.” It is my prayer for myself and for you. that we will realize that all we have comes from the Lord and should be used for Him in service to Him.

SHE HAS DONE WHAT SHE COULD

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:6-13,
Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-9*

Our next example begins with a woman who had a box of very precious ointment. If we study all our Scriptures for this lesson, we see that this lady is Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. She used the expensive ointment to anoint the Lord. Judas and some of the disciples wanted to correct her for using such expensive oil. Judas said it could be sold and used for the poor. We are told in John 12:6 that Judas really wasn't interested in the poor, but instead was interested in how much money the oil could bring them. The Lord corrected Judas and the others and said in Mark 14:6,

“...Let her alone; why trouble you her? she hath wrought a good work on me.”

The Lord went further to say of her in Mark 14:8 “**She hath done what she could.**” We can ask ourselves have we “done what we could?” I often hear someone say that if they just had a talent like someone else, they would surely use it for the Lord. I heard a young person say one time that if he just had a lot of money, he would give it to help the work at the church. The Lord has never told us to do something we aren't able to do, nor has He asked us to give what we don't have. We are to be like Mary in our lesson today and **do what we can**. If we just do what we can, and do it all for His glory, it can be said of us, “She has done what she could.”

I have known several elderly ladies who always saw little things that needed to be done, and without any seeking of glory they would perform these little deeds. Two of these ladies have gone on to be with the Lord now; and often I see little things around the church that need to be done, and I think of them, and how important their ministry was. They would think they weren't doing anything important, but often what we

consider small things, are the important things that help to have a good and profitable service for the Lord. When I think of these ladies, I remember that the Lord said, “She has done what she could.”

MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS

*Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:5, 1 Timothy 4:6,
2 Chronicles 22:3-5*

“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” (2 Tim. 1:5)

There isn't a lot told us about the two women we will look at in this lesson. We do know their names, Lois and Eunice. Lois was the grandmother of Timothy, and Eunice was his mother.

We also know from this Scripture that both of them were women of faith. We can see their influence even in 1 Timothy 4:6, where the Lord shows us that Timothy also had attained this faith. It is such a privilege to be a mother and a grandmother! This is a high calling of God. Lois and Eunice must have shown their faith in the way they lived as well as in what they would say to Timothy. Lois and Eunice may have thought they weren't doing much; they were just being a good mother and grandmother in their home with Timothy. But what results!

Today, too many look at being a home maker and mother as just something on the side from their careers and social life. The most important thing that we can do for the Lord, during the years of raising our children, is to be a mother that is there, living a testimony in front of the children, telling them of the Lord, and teaching them God's Word.

Some times grandmothers think their work is all over. I have heard some grandmothers say they raised their children, now their children can raise theirs. In some ways this is true, but it doesn't mean there isn't a place or need for grandma. Some of my happiest memories of my childhood was with my grandmother. What a blessing and privilege is lost when we can't see our place of service in our grandchildren's lives.

For a good study on this, follow through the life of Timothy, and see how faithful he was and how he served the Lord, as a worker together with the Apostle Paul. This all started no doubt by the faith seen in this mother and grandmother. This could be a rebuke or correction to us as mothers, but also can be an encouragement to see how we can be used in the lives of our own children and other children. May it be our prayer that we can be the kind of mothers and grandmothers that can be a good influence with children.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Scripture Reading: Ruth and Judges

There are two books in the Bible that carry the names of women. This doesn't mean that women wrote these books. All the Bible was written "by holy men of God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Esther is the other book that carries a woman's name. We will study Esther in another lesson.

The book of Ruth is often called a "love story." Indeed, it is a love story. There is perfect love between Ruth and Boaz; also there is perfect love shown of the redeemer in this book. The most important truth in this book is the study of the redeemer, who is a type or picture of the great Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. (As you read the book of Ruth along with this lesson, don't miss that point of the study of the Redeemer.) However, we will look at the book through Ruth and the other women in this book.

When we study the book of Ruth, it is best to go back and look at the book of Judges, especially the first part. What happened in the book of Ruth took place during the times of Judges. In looking at Judges, we see that God had given 13 Judges to serve and help the nation of Israel. However, we find an outstanding Scripture in chapter 17 verse 6, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This caused the nation much trouble, and certainly trouble for the individuals who practiced this.

Seeing the times of the book of Judges gives us a clue to the start of the book of Ruth. In the first verses we read about a man named Elimelech. Right off we see this man "doing that which was right in his own eyes." We have no Scripture telling us that he prayed about moving, or asking God's direction. There was a famine there in Bethlehem-Judah and Elimelech took his family and moved to Moab. The Moabites were descendants of Lot. They were sinful people and worshipped idols. Elimelech didn't consider the fact that he was taking his

family from a land that God had given the Israelites; a land that worshipped the true God. He didn't consider the fact that his sons would only be associated with young people who did not honor the true God, but worshipped idols. Like so many today, he was thinking of the material needs of his family, instead of the spiritual needs. What a bad choice he made! He and his family suffered because of it.

Even though our study is about women, we certainly can get some lessons from Elimelech. We should always put God first in our lives. Think of the spiritual above the material and let Him be our Guide in all things.

Naomi

Though our study is mostly about Ruth, we will consider three women of the book of Ruth. The first one mentioned is Naomi. Naomi was the wife of Elimelech. She was a good wife and went along with him to Moab. There were lots of sorrows there for Naomi. First of all her husband died. Then the two sons married Moabite wives, and they dwelt there in Moab 10 years. Then the two sons died. Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law, who were Moabites. We read all this in the first five verses of the first chapter of Ruth.

When Naomi found herself alone in the land of Moab, decisions were hers to make now. She decided to go back to her own country. The only problem was that she would have to leave her two daughters-in-law. Thus far, we have seen Naomi as the patient obedient wife, and her good relationship with the two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. We will see that Naomi had born a good testimony to them.

She had told them about the God of Israel. She had shown love to the young ladies. Though we are not told, we see the results of a good life by Naomi in front of the Orpah and Ruth. Their relationship and love toward their mother-in-law, shows what kind of life Naomi had lived. We can get a lesson from this. No matter how hard the times, there is some work to do for our Lord. When we read the final chapters of this book, we

see how far-reaching Naomi's testimony to Ruth was.

When Naomi started to leave, Orpah and Ruth were ready to go with her. However, in verse 8 of chapter 1, we see that Naomi talked with Orpah and Ruth and told them to go back to their own families. She told them how much she appreciated their being so good to their husbands (her sons) and how good they had been to her. Then she kissed them and told them to go back to their families. They both cried and didn't want to leave her. She reminded them they were young and would want to marry again, and that she had no more sons. After much sorrow and crying, Orpah kissed Naomi and left. Ruth refused to leave her.

Although Naomi must have taught the girls much about the God of Israel, the true God, she did give Ruth some wrong advice. In verse 15, Naomi said,

*“Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, **and unto her gods**; return thou after thy sister-in-law.”*

Ruth came back with a wonderful answer in verse 16,

*“And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, **and thy God my God.**”*

Ruth had learned much about the one true God, and didn't want to go back to the idols of Moab. What a wonderful testimony that she would be ready to leave her native country and family, along with idol worship, to go to Israel and worship the true God. When Naomi saw that Ruth would not be moved from this stand, she took Ruth and the two went back to Bethlehem.

When they arrived back, Naomi told the people that greeted them, not to call her Naomi, which means “Pleasant,”

but rather call her Mara, which means “Bitter.” She said that she had gone out full, and came back empty. She was thinking of her husband and sons. She felt some bitterness about being so alone, but she didn't know that the Lord had many good things in her future. She didn't know what the Lord had in store for her through Ruth.

Orpah

We know that Orpah didn't want to leave Naomi. She cried and tried to go with her. However, she was persuaded to go back home to her family. It makes us wonder if she had really accepted the real God that Naomi had told the girls about. Or did she just love Naomi because she had been so good to them, and didn't want to part from her? We really don't know. However, we can get some applications to our lives today from Orpah.

Some people today want to go along with Christians and do as they do, and yet never really have the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Sometimes, we just like some Christian or like their way of life, but don't know the One that we must receive in order to be a real Christian. Other people may really accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour, but when trouble comes or decisions to be made, they will yield to their own wills. Whatever was the case with Orpah she chose to go back to her family, and back to idol worship. We never hear of Orpah again. How sad her life must have been if she had, really learned of the true God and yet had no one to talk to about Him.

Today there are some who do worship idols. Some people do bow to a statue, but there are other idols in many lives. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we read,

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Although most of us would say that we do not love money and certainly wouldn't worship money, yet so many give most of their lives in trying to get more and more money. I have seen many people who have desired to go to hear the Word, after they are older and are not able to get out and go to hear the Word. Some of these spent their young years and their youthful strength in making money with no time for the worship or study of God's Word. Sometimes by then it is too late. This does not mean that this person isn't saved; but rather that the wrong choice was made in putting other things first. In 2 Timothy 3 we read,

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (vs. 2) and “...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” (vs. 4).

Some get caught up in entertainment or social lives that take them from worship of our Lord, or from studying His Word. Satan attacks Christians in this way. He cannot take our eternal life from us, but he certainly wants to keep us from serving our Lord.

I pray we will all be like Ruth and make the choice of serving our Wonderful Lord and Saviour. Ruth didn't know where the path would lead, but she made the right choice.

RUTH MEETS BOAZ

Scripture Reading: Ruth 2

When Ruth and Naomi went back to Bethlehem, they realized they would need to get work. Ruth asked her mother in law about going to the fields to glean the grain. It was harvest time, and sometimes people would go behind the workers that were harvesting the grain, and get what was left over. Naomi agreed with her that she should go. We can see the hand of the Lord taking care of Naomi and Ruth. Without knowing who he was, Ruth went to the fields of Boaz and asked the workers if she could glean there. She didn't know at that time that Boaz was a near kinsman of Elimelech. God was watching over Ruth and Naomi, and worked it all out for Ruth to meet Boaz.

When Boaz came and saw Ruth, he asked about her and the workers told him who she was. He was very kind, and told the workers to leave some grain on purpose—not just what accidentally fell. He also talked with Ruth and told her not to go to other fields, but stay there because she could glean with the other maidens and be safe. He also had told the workers to be kind to her. He made it possible for her to get grain, and at the same time was protecting her. She asked why he was being so kind. He told her he had heard how good she was to her mother-in-law, and how she had chosen to come live there leaving her own country.

We can see some things about the good character of Boaz, in the way he greeted the workers. In verse 4 of this second chapter, he greeted them with “the Lord be with you.” He was a man that worshipped the true God of Israel, and wasn't ashamed to witness for Him. He showed his kindness to all the workers, and he especially showed kindness to Ruth. He was making it possible that she glean abundantly; protected her, and offered her water and food. Boaz said to Ruth (in verse 12), “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” He was quick to see that even though Ruth

was a foreigner, she now believed in the true God of Israel, and was living the life of a good Israelite. Ruth also showed her testimony by saying in verse 13, “Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thy handmaidens.” So, Ruth worked all day until the evening. Then she beat out the grain and took it to Naomi. When her mother in law saw how much grain Ruth brought home, she began to question where she had worked. Ruth told her about the man, Boaz, on whose land she worked, and Naomi knew it was a kinsman. Ruth told her mother-in-law about how kind Boaz was to her, and what a good man he was.

Naomi told Ruth in verse 20, “...Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead—the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.” Ruth worked each day providing the needs for herself and Naomi all through the barley and wheat harvest.

Ruth probably didn't know all the customs and laws of the Jews, but knew it was important that Boaz was a near kinsman. We see that the Lord is working all things out for good for Ruth and Naomi and for Boaz.

BOAZ — KINSMAN REDEEMER

*Scripture Reading: Ruth 3-4, Mathew 22:24,
Deuteronomy 25:5-6*

Things were going well for Ruth and for Naomi. They had come back to Israel without anything. Naomi's husband had died, her two sons had died, and they had nothing in the way of earthly possessions. We can surely see the hand of the Lord in leading them. When Ruth went out to find work to provide food for them, she went to the fields that belonged to Boaz, who showed her so much kindness and arranged for her to reap even more than normal.

It was a custom in Israel that if a man died, the nearest kinsman could redeem his land and marry the widow and raise children as unto his kinsman who died without children. The near kinsman had to be willing and able to do this. Naomi knew about this and talked with Ruth. Since Boaz had shown such kindness to them, and had helped in so many ways, Naomi suggested to Ruth that she offer herself to him as his wife.

In verse 5 of chapter 3, Ruth tells Naomi that she would do all that she had said to her. Ruth was very obedient and respectful to Naomi, and followed through on her advise. When Ruth approached Boaz, he was very touched and complimented Ruth for her kindness, and how that she had not followed after young men or rich men. He could see how godly Ruth was. He also recognized that everyone knew she was a virtuous woman and he protected her against any cause of criticism. Boaz desired to redeem the property for Naomi and Ruth and to marry Ruth. However, he told her that there was another who was a nearer kinsman than he. When Ruth told Naomi all that had happened, Naomi told her to just wait and leave things to Boaz. Naomi knew that Boaz would look into the situation. I am sure that Naomi and Ruth both just rested in the Lord and waited for Him to work things out.

Boaz didn't waste any time in looking into the matter. It

was the custom in those days to meet at the gate of the city to work out any problems or business deals. As a just man, Boaz called ten of the elders of the city and asked them to sit with him. The man who was the nearer kinsman to Ruth came by and he asked him to sit with them. Boaz was doing everything right and just according to their law. He then told this kinsman,

“Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:” (Ruth 4:3)

Boaz went on to say to the kinsman that since he was the nearer kinsman he had first place to redeem Naomi's possessions. The nearer kinsman said he would do it. However, in verse 5, Boaz reminded him that when he did he would have to also marry Ruth and raise up children in the name of her dead husband who had no children.

The man refused to do this, and was ready to give away his first right to be the redeemer. If you read through verse 9 of this fourth chapter of Ruth, you can see the rituals they went through to seal a deal and make it known among all the witnesses. Boaz had handled all things in the proper way with much wisdom, and in verse 9, we read,

“And Boaz said unto the elders and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.”

Everything was done properly and in order. Now Boaz was free to have Ruth as his wife.

“Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place.” (Ruth 4:10)

Boaz had purchased the privilege to marry Ruth because of his work as a redeemer. The remainder of the chapter tells us that Boaz and Ruth were married, with the blessing of all the people. God blessed them with a son who was named Obed. Naomi became the nurse for the baby. At last Naomi's life was full and happy again. When she first returned to her country, she told her friends not to call her Naomi anymore. Naomi meant "pleasant." She told them to call her Mara, which meant "bitter." She had experienced so many problems and times of sadness in her life. Now the Lord had given Naomi so much, she was happy once again.

We can see how the Lord worked in the lives of these two women. We can also know how the Lord can use each of us as women in this life. When left to make her own decisions, Naomi had gone back to the land the Lord had given to the Jewish people. She had returned to her own God. Ruth also had chosen to leave her idol-worshipping country and worship the one true God of Israel. When they made this choice, God could work out things for them and give them the joy and peace that only He can give.

In studying this book of Ruth, we have tried to stay with our subject of studying the women of the Bible. However, we must see how Boaz is a picture of our Great Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord paid the price to redeem us from our burden of sin. He alone could do this. He came to earth as a kinsman, in that He took on Himself the form of man and came in a human body, but He was without sin. Therefore, He could redeem us from the penalty of sin. This is the only thing that can save any of us. We should be very thankful to our Redeemer, and for the life we have in him.

Before leaving this book of Ruth, we should notice the last few verses. These tell us that Obed (this one born to Boaz and Ruth) was the father of Jesse who was the father of David. Also in the first chapter of Matthew where the generation of Jesus Christ is listed, we find Obed, Boaz and Ruth listed in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. God knowing all things of the future had much in mind for Ruth when He was taking

care of these two lonely women.

We can get so many lessons for ourselves as women, when we study these women in the Book of Ruth. Also, if we feel alone and sometimes feel there isn't much in life we can do, look up and know that our Lord is there. He knows all things. If He leaves us here on this earth, there is a divine reason. To find real peace and happiness, we must find the will of God and live in it.

ESTHER

Scripture Reading: The Book of Esther

We wouldn't want to leave our study of women without looking into the life of Esther. Like Ruth, there is a book of the Bible called by Esther's name. We know that the headings in our Bibles are not part of the inspired Word of God. They are put there by man to help us in studying and referring to Scripture. Esther and Ruth are the only two books with the name of women as the title. They did not write the books.

“Holy men of old wrote as they were moved of the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

You are urged to read the entire book of Esther along with this lesson. We are not going to study the book as a whole, but rather look at the book through our study of Women. To understand Esther's life and how the Lord used her, we need to look into some background of the time and place where she lived.

The book of Esther took place at a time that the Jewish people were scattered abroad throughout the nations. King Ahasuerus reigned in the country where Esther lived. He reigned over 127 provinces from India unto Ethiopia. The Jewish people tried through all their problems to always worship the true God of Israel even while living in countries who didn't believe in God and worshipped idols and other gods. It was in this condition that Esther grew up. She was an orphan and was raised by Mordecai who was a relative who took her to raise when her father and mother died. He was among those Jews that were in captivity. He cared for her as if she were his own daughter, and taught her concerning the true God of Israel. She looked to him as a father, and she relied on his wisdom and advice.

We will see as we continue in our study of Esther that this obedience to her “father,” and her relying on his wisdom and

advice helped in Esther being used of the Lord in the preservation of the nation of Israel. God had a plan to use Esther to deliver Israel and her yielding to God made it possible for her to carry out this privilege of serving her God.

There are a few other women mentioned in this book of Esther. Most of them are not even mentioned by name; however there is one that we want to look at because it was because of her that a door was opened for Esther to be able to serve God and to be a part in the saving of the Jews.

Ahasuerus' wife, Queen Vashti is mentioned in the first chapter of Esther. There isn't much given about her. King Ahasuerus had a great party to show off how much he owned. It went on for seven days, and he had served in vessels of gold. He had "one of kind" of these to show off. He had much riches and power to brag about and show to his visitors. Then he thought of his wife who was beautiful and he called for her to come and show off her beauty. Vashti refused to come! This was something not heard of! Imagine not obeying the king! We can admire Vashti in this. Think of what was being asked of her to come into the party of all the drunk men to show off her beautiful body! But, of course, her refusal caused problems for Vashti. She was put out as queen, and all her possessions taken from her. Her punishment was great; however, we can see the Lord working through this. It was because of King Ahasuerus' need for a new queen that Esther was able to get in a position to help the Jews.

King Ahasuerus was looking for a new queen. The suggestion was made to him that all the beautiful young virgins of his providence be brought in for him to choose a queen. Esther was one of these beautiful young ladies who was brought to the palace. Mordecai, who worked outside the palace, passed by each day to check and watch to see that Esther was doing alright. He told Esther not to reveal, at this time, that she was one of the Jewish young ladies. When the king saw Esther, he was especially pleased and showed her extra favors. Each young lady was to wait until the king called for her.

While all this was going on, many of the men of the coun-

try were wanting to get rid of all the Jews. The Jews were persecuted and ridiculed. One man named Haman, who had been appointed above all the princes was especially plotting a way to get rid of the Jews. Haman went to the king and told him about all these Jews that had come as captives. He told the king that the Jews were making trouble. He said they had their own laws and that they wouldn't obey the laws of the king. He also asked permission to offer a reward for anyone who would help to destroy them and bring their profits to the king. This pleased the king and he gave Haman authority to carry this out. Haman especially hated Mordecai. Mordecai was one who would not bow to Haman, and, of course, this angered Haman.

Thus it was declared throughout all the 127 provinces that everyone should do all they could to destroy the Jews. Mordecai was grieved about this. While this was all going on, the king had chosen his new queen. He chose Esther! One day Esther noticed that Mordecai was sitting outside the gate looking so sad and was clothed in sackcloth. She sent one of her servants out to find out what the problem was. Mordecai told the servant about Haman's plan, and even sent a copy of the decree to Esther. The decree told about money being offered to anyone helping to destroy the Jews. Mordecai wanted Esther to go to the king and seek help. Esther reminded Mordecai that no one, not even the queen, could go to the king unless he had asked for them. She didn't think she could help in this way.

In chapter 4 and verses 13-14 Mordecai sent word to Esther that even she wouldn't escape if all the Jews were destroyed. Then he said,

*“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**”*

Mordecai was showing Esther that perhaps the Lord had

brought her to this very place and time, for this very purpose. He and all the Jews had been praying much about the situation, and felt that perhaps that is why God had seen to it that Esther had become Queen. Esther sent a message back to Mordecai in verse 16,

“Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast, ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days , night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”

The Jews did pray for Esther. After three days of prayer, Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house. When the king saw her he showed favor to her and called her in. Esther was very brave to do this. It could have even meant her death. However, the Lord was in control. He had heard their prayers. He had planned things this way for the saving of the Jews. Knowing the power of her God, Esther had trusted that He would deliver her. If not, she was willing to perish trying to help her people.

Esther was certainly in a hard place. It seemed the saving of the Jewish people depended upon her; and yet,. she was not allowed to go to the king, unless he called her. She made a decision to help. She asked Mordecai and the Jews to be praying and fasting. She, also, was praying and fasting. We all have decisions to make that are sometimes very hard. We, too, must bring this to the Lord and be open to act as He leads.

After three days of prayer, Esther prepared herself in royal clothing and went to the inner court of the King's house and waited. The king sat on the royal throne. The king looked up and saw her. This must have been a very tense time for Esther. This could have caused severe punishment, even death. However, when the king saw her, he held out to her the golden scepter, which was an invitation to come in. In chapter 5 verse 3, the king said to Esther,

“What will you, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom.”

How good Esther must have felt! She had found favour with the king, and now she had the opportunity to serve the Lord in helping the Jewish people. Esther was wise in the way she handled the situation. She didn't just come out with accusations against Haman. Instead, she respectfully spoke to the king in verse 8,

“If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said.”

Haman didn't know the God of Israel was leading Esther. He went home bragging about being the only person that Esther had invited to the King's banquet. He felt so elated and important that now his plan to get rid of the Jews, and especially Mordecai, could be carried out. He even built a gallows to hang Mordecai.

“So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther, the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? and it shall be performed even to the half of the kingdom.”

With much respect and honor to the king, her husband, Esther told him her request. In verses 3 and 4 she said, “...let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish.”

King Ahasuerus was very angry and asked who would dare

do such a thing! Esther answered that the adversary and enemy was the wicked Haman! When the king learned of all that Haman was doing, he had him hung on the very gallows that Haman had prepared for Mordecai.

After much prayer by herself and others, Esther had the courage and strength to go forward to help the Jewish people. She had realized that perhaps this was the very reason that God had put her in this position. She also was willing to perish in trying to serve the Lord by helping to save the Jews.

Esther had told the king about Mordecai being her "father". King Ahasuerus gave Esther and Mordecai many riches, and Mordecai was promoted. Things had worked out so well for Esther and Mordecai. But what about all the Jews scattered over the 127 provinces? The decree had gone out that they should be killed!

Esther once again decided to try to help the Jewish people. She again went to the king. Verse 3 of chapter 8 reads,

“And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman, the Agagite and his device that he had devised against the Jews.”

We should especially notice, in verse 5, how respectful and humble Esther was when she asked these things of the King. She used such expressions as, “If it please the king,” “if this thing seem right to you,” and “if it be pleasing in your eyes.” Esther didn't use the fact that he loved her, nor demand anything. She did however, get over to the king that she and Mordecai were not only safe, but better off; but the remainder of the Jews were still in trouble.

King Ahasuerus gave Esther and Mordecai the power to send out the word that the Jews were not to be slain, and that they could take up arms to protect themselves. He gave Mordecai his ring for a seal to the proclamation.

There were many battles, but the Jewish people were saved. Remember that Mordecai had told Esther, (4:13-14)

that if she didn't act, the God of Israel could raise up someone else to save the nation of Israel. Mordecai was reminding Esther that the God of Israel had always preserved the nation, and would again. But perhaps this time was her opportunity to serve.

And so it was that the Lord used Esther to help to save the Jewish people from being destroyed.

As we study such women as Ruth and Esther, and the other women we have considered, we can get many lessons for ourselves. Yes, the Lord can use us. Just as we see these women in all their humility, and good judgment, and willingness to yield to whatever the Lord brings, we, too, can be used. We will never be asked to do what Ruth or Esther did, but we do have the privilege and responsibility to yield to the guidance of the Lord and His Word to fulfill what He has for us to do today. Let us be like Esther and not just rest when things are going so well for us. But rather see the need of others. Sometimes, we are content that we and our children all have the Lord as Saviour. But what about the many boys and girls who do not know Him? Many children are in homes where they never hear of the Lord, and that He loved them and gave Himself to die for them. Many wives and mothers don't have the peace that passes all understanding. We must share the Word with them. We should be alert to every door that is open to serve our Wonderful Lord.

A VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 31:10-31

It would be of much benefit to any one reading this lesson, to first read this Scripture from your Bible. Then keep your Bible open as you study the lesson.

This portion of Scripture starts out with a question. “Who can find a virtuous woman?” Then we are told: “her price is far above rubies.” The next verse begins to tell the character and action of a virtuous woman.

First, we should look at what the word "virtue" means. In the dictionary we find that virtue means force or strength of mind and body; courage; moral excellence in action and practice. The Bible dictionary goes along with this, but also gives: moral goodness in thought, feeling, and action; moral excellence such as modesty, purity, power, ability. Faith, hope, love are virtues infused by God.

Verse 11 begins to answer the question set forth in verse 10. We see that her husband has complete trust in her knowing she will only do him good, not evil, all the days of her life. The next verses begin to tell of some of the things that she does. She isn't afraid to work; in fact it says “willingly.” She wants to work in order to care for her family. It isn't a feeling of having to do but rather wanting to do it to have her family well taken care of . She isn't lazy, and would even give up some sleep to rise early in the morning and get things done right for her family. She carries on business, works in the garden, she sews—whatever it takes to provide well for her family. She takes care of herself to see that she has the strength to carry on. Through all this, this virtuous woman doesn't forget others who have less. She doesn't neglect her family, but at the same time is not selfish for her own family. “She stretches out her hand to the poor” (vs. 20). Her husband or family never have a reason to be ashamed, because she also provides proper things for herself.

Starting with verse 25, we see more of moral and spiritual

things. Verse 25 says, “Strength and honour are her clothing.” The next verse tells us she speaks with wisdom, and kindness. These are attributes that can be used for the glory of our Lord. How does her reward come? Verse 28 is something that every mother should desire. Because of her willingness, unselfishness, her wisdom, and kindness in looking well to the ways of her household, her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also praises her.

As Christian women today, we should desire to be virtuous women—one whom this chapter could describe. We could only obtain this as we yield to the Lord. Remember, we must let the Lord infuse faith, hope, and love from Him before we can be virtuous women.

Please read verses 30 and 31 again. The things that seem to mean so much to people in this life are deceitful and vain. But loving the Lord and, having reverential fear of His power, will make a life like this possible. Verse 31 tells us that the only praise we should desire is from the work we are able to do for His glory.

SALVATION

In previous lessons we have looked at Scriptures directed to women. We have also studied many women of the Bible. However, we must see that all Scripture is for us (men and women) and is profitable to us. For example, if we have not seen from the Scriptures that we are sinners and must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, then we would not be able to live up to the Scripture that we have been studying.

In Romans 3:23 we read,

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

And in Romans 3:10, we see,

“As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.”

From the time of Adam and Eve to this present day, everyone that was born was born a sinner. However, our wonderful God made provision whereby we could come out from under the penalty of sin. He did this by sending His only Son, who was sinless, perfect, and righteous, to die for us.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

We must believe this in our hearts. When we believe with our hearts, we accept Christ as our Saviour. If there is one who has been studying these lessons for women who is not saved, you must accept Christ as your Saviour before you will be able to be the kind of woman mentioned in the previous lesson. None of us can live the life we should as a child of God, unless we first of all know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour: “Believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31). The apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:13,

*“I can do all things **through Christ** which strengtheneth me.”*

No one, in their own strength, can live the life that God wants us to live. It is only when we have the Lord as our Saviour, we can live the life that we should live for Him. When we accept Christ as our Saviour, He comes to dwell in our hearts and will lead and direct us in all things if we yield to Him.

If we have Christ in our hearts, we can go further and obey Romans 12:1-2 which says,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

If we accept Him as our Saviour, then we can present our bodies to Him, letting Him direct our lives through the Word. Then we can live a life that will be honoring to Him, bring glory to His Name, and be for His pleasure.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

This is a Scripture written to all believers. Therefore it is written to us as women if we are also believers. We seldom realize all that took place when our Saviour died on the cross of Calvary. Our Scripture today is one result of what happens when we accept what Christ did on the cross for us. When we accept Him into our hearts as our Saviour, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts.

In this same book of 1 Corinthians chapter three and verses 16-17 we read,

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

What a wonderful truth to know that the Holy Spirit dwells within us! We are not on our own to live and serve the Lord. We have the leading of the Holy Spirit! I am persuaded that we could never live the life that He would have us live without the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps most of us at some time or other have declared in our hearts that we would live for our Lord, and we would be His servants. We very quickly learn that we cannot do this in our own strength. That is why it is such a wonderful thing to know that the Spirit of Christ dwells within our hearts. We can say with the Apostle Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is a wonderful blessing; but it is also a responsibility. We are told that we are not our own

because we have been bought with a price (and what a price that was for the Lord Jesus!). But the verse doesn't stop there. We are told to glorify God in our bodies and spirit, because we belong to Him. In Romans 12:1-2, we are told to present or give our bodies to Him as a living sacrifices. We are also told that it is a reasonable service. Since He has bought us with the price paid on Calvary, we belong to Him, and it is only reasonable that we should want to serve Him. When we see this in our hearts, we will have the desire to be His servants.

In a similar verse in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians we are also told that the temple of God is holy and that we should not defile the temple. It is a good study to go back in the Old Testament and study concerning the temple that God had built for His nation of Israel. David had the desire to build a "house for God;" but because of the many battles that David had to fight, God told David that he would not build the temple, but his son Solomon would build the temple. When we read concerning the temple, we find that everything was done just perfectly. The best materials were used, much gold and other precious materials. The temple was declared to be holy. As you read concerning the earthly temple, compare that with what God has given us the privilege of being. We are the living temples of God. Therefore we certainly should live holy lives. Lives that are acceptable to Him. We are not to be conformed to this world, but rather be transformed with renewed minds. We should seek the perfect will of God, and let that be our guide for life. When Christ came to earth, His sole purpose was to do the will of His heavenly Father. Today, with the Spirit living within to guide us and with the Word of God to lead us, we have all that we need to live for Him. Let us rejoice for the privilege of being His servants.

"My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." (I Cor. 16:24) "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." (Eph. 6:24)

