

"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40



Beautiful You Devotionals



Written by the
Southern Baptists of Texas Convention
Women's Ministry Team

Edited by
Rockie Naser, Emily Smith
and Judy Van Hooser

© 2013 Southern Baptists of Texas Convention
Women in Ministry
www.sbtexas.com/women

Published and distributed by the
Southern Baptists of Texas Convention
Cover and layout design: Allen Sutton

"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Rebekah

DOING GOOD THINGS WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS. (Gen. 24:15-25)

~written by Rockie Naser

The Story:

When Rebekah came to the well with her jar of water, she had no idea what would happen to her. A strange man asked for water and she immediately gave the water she had. If that was not enough, she offered to draw water for his camels so they did not have to go thirsty. She had no idea that the man was a servant of Abraham, a man who was rich and loved the Lord. She didn't know Abraham was the father of a very handsome eligible bachelor named Isaac.

Abraham's servant was on a mission to find a wife for Isaac. He prayed the Lord would reveal the woman who would be Isaac's wife by having her offer to give him water, along with his camels. Rebekah did not know anything about that prayer or the conversation the servant had with his master, Abraham. She simply served without any expectations. Eventually, Rebekah married Isaac.

The Lesson:

We too have opportunities to help others in our lives without expecting anything in return. Our inner beauty is portrayed when we help others with no strings attached. When we portray this inner beauty, we are often surprised by God's added blessings.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can we portray our inner beauty through acts of kindness towards our husband or children without expectations?
2. How can we help others where we work with no strings attached?
3. How can we help our neighbors with no expectation of having them return the favor?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Abigail

LEVEL-HEADED PEACEMAKER. (I Samuel 25) ~written by Kelley Halsdorf

The Story:

Samuel, the prophet, had just died and David, the chosen king, is on the run from the reigning King Saul. David's men had been the "protective service" for the sheep owners while the sheep were out in the fields. David and his men protected Nabal's sheep and shepherds while out in the fields. When the sheep shearing time came, David sent men to ask for provisions from Nabal. Nabal (whose name means fool) denied the request and David was ready to kill Nabal and all the men in his household. One of Nabal's servants found Abigail (Nabal's wife) to tell her what had happened and warn her that David would soon be there to kill them all. Abigail took action to prevent this from happening. Without telling her husband, she had the servants gather food and drink and she went out to meet David. Abigail showed great wisdom when she approached David. She knew who he was and who David's God was. She asked for David's forgiveness even though she was not the one who had offended him. She appealed to him on the grounds of his own conscience. She knew David would be king and the needless bloodshed would one day be a thorn in his side. David was very pleased with Abigail and granted the pardon she had requested. Soon after that, Nabal was having a banquet in his house with much food and wine. The next morning, Abigail told him what had happened. Nabal had a heart attack and died in 10 days. When David heard about this, he praised God and sent for Abigail to become his wife.

The Lesson:

How often are we faced with Abigail's decision? Do we stop and think through stressful situations or do we just panic and run forward to "make it right"? Panic usually leads to poor decisions and poor decisions usually lead to broken relationships. We, like Abigail, know God and know what He is capable of. Therefore, we can also place our own fears and frustrations aside and trust Him to work things out. We don't have to lash out or attack others; we can respond in love and wisdom-just like Abigail's wise choice to put the needs of others ahead of her own needs and fears saved the life of her family members.

Questions to consider:

1. Do our actions in the face of difficult circumstances reflect our fears, or do they reflect the confidence we should have in our God?
2. Are you known as the one who overreacts to even small issues, or are you known as the one who brings a sense of calm when others start panicking?
3. Our families tend to see us at our worst. In what ways can we start to bring peace in our homes when the stress levels get high or when someone is wronged?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Rahab

GOD TOOK HER "YUCK" AND REDEEMED IT, THEN USED HER FOR HIS GOOD.

(Joshua 2:9-11; 1:2, 11, 13; Ex 3:14-God's covenant name; genealogy, Matt 1:5, Faith and courage, Matt 1:6, Heb. 11:31, James 2:25)

~written by Anita O. Wood

The Story:

The first mention of Rahab includes her "yuck": Rahab had a bad reputation. She was a harlot, guilty of sexual relations before marriage, and/or after she married. Unfaithful describes her life in one word. Her name meant "strong, arrogant, pride and insolent" so likely, she lived those characteristics in every unfaithful manner.

Somehow, Rahab learned of Israel's God, Yahweh. She knew He was a covenant God, one who kept His word and never changed His mind. One day she met two spies from Israel. She immediately let them know she was familiar with Yahweh. They needed help and she courageously hid them and saved their lives. She requested safety for herself and her family. God granted her request through the two men. He knew she acknowledged Him as the only true God. Rahab was a believer.

Rahab's life changed. We know she then used her ability and influence to honor God. She married a godly man, bore a son, and is one of four women listed in the genealogy of Jesus! God used her strength for Him; she was no longer unfaithful! In fact, her great faith and faithful actions are mentioned in the "faith-hall-of-fame" in Hebrews chapter 11.

The Lesson:

God never holds our past against us. He does not ask "yucky" people to clean up before coming to Him; He accepts us just as we are. Every person has "yucky" baggage, yet God made a way for us to be born again and gives us the wonderful opportunity to live and honor Him.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you know anyone who needs the encouragement of Rahab's story? It may be you!
2. Is it true that some people are so bad there is no hope for them? Why or why not?
3. Have you become a believer?

You're either in God's family or not in the family. Jesus made it possible for anyone to be born again into God's family. Like Rahab, you can make this decision today.

(Their are evangelistic helps located on the Tools & More page.)



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Deborah

SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY, LED FROM HER STRENGTH. (Judges 4-5)

~written by Jennifer Garcia

The Story:

Israel had done what was evil in the Lord's sight so God handed them over to King Jabin, a Canaanite king, who ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. They cried out to the Lord for help. God raised up Deborah, a prophetess - a woman serving as God's spokesperson, she was a judge and a military deliverer. She would hold court under the Palm of Deborah (a palm tree) and people would come to her to settle their disputes.

Deborah sent for Barak. She told him God commanded him to assemble 10,000 warriors from two tribes of Israel at Mount Tabor. God would lure King Jabin's army to the river and there He would give them victory over the army. Barak replied to Deborah saying, "I will go, but only if you go with me!" She said she would go. Deborah chose to seize the opportunity and lead from her strength, and God gave the Israelites the victory over the army.

The Lesson:

God had gifted Deborah with the ability to speak His Word. People trusted her. When God provided the opportunity, she stepped up and led with the gift God had given her. God has gifted each of us with a unique strength, just as He gave Deborah her strength. When God presents an opportunity to serve Him, we need to seize it and lead with the gift He has given us.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are your strengths? List them.
2. What opportunity is God presenting for you to seize?
3. How can you use the opportunities given to you and the strengths you have to lead others?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Ruth

GAVE UP EVERYTHING TO FOLLOW THE TRUE GOD. (Ruth 1:14-18)

~written by Laura Taylor

The Story:

Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, were both widowed. Naomi was from Bethlehem. After her husband and sons died, she decided to go back to the land of her birth. Ruth loved Naomi and decided to leave her own homeland to go with Naomi. As a very loyal and loving daughter-in-law, Ruth committed to accept her mother-in-law's family and God as her own. She picked wheat in the fields of Naomi's relative, Boaz, to provide for them both. While picking wheat, Ruth was observed by Boaz and gained his favor. Upon Naomi's suggestion Ruth sought out Boaz who committed to marry her and care for both women.

Ruth left her homeland, family, traditions and all she had ever known to go with Naomi. She committed to follow the one true God when she went with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. God provided for her care through Boaz.

The Lesson:

God often calls us to willingly give up our plans to follow His. Sometimes God calls us to get out of our comfort zone, possibly leave the things that seem familiar so we will see our need for Him. We often get too set in our routine and don't seek Him. Ruth left the familiar to find the True God. She was in a place where everything changed around her, but she willingly went with Naomi in order to seek out Naomi's God.

Questions to Consider:

1. We often don't like change, but sometimes we are asked to make changes. Are you willing to make the changes needed to seek the one True God?
2. How can those changes help you get a better view of God?
3. What specific changes do you need to make to know God better?
4. Are you too comfortable in your present circumstances and unresponsive to God's call to follow Him wherever He may lead you?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Sarah

LEADER BY EXAMPLE & A PROMISE KEPT (Genesis 11:29-13:3)

~written by Irma Ramos

The Story:

There is much to be said about Sarai, Abraham's wife. Today let's focus on the verses above that mention the first few years of the relationship between Sarai and Abraham. God definitely had the right woman for Abraham. She followed her husband and remained by his side until her death. They started in the land of Ur and then traveled north to Haran. After residing there a few years, Abraham buried his father there.

At that time, God spoke to Abraham and gave him a calling and a promise which included Sarai. By faith, Abraham and Sarai went south to Canaan in Shechem and settled there until a famine came. Then they went to Egypt and back up to Bethel and Shechem. How's that for road trips in life? Sarai and Abraham experienced many adventures and the Lord their God was in all of them. Can you see Sarai following Abraham fearlessly through dusty trails and wildernesses, honoring his decisions of when to move and where?

In Genesis 17:5, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah. God's favor on Sarah was evident when he said to Abraham: "I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations: kings of peoples will come from her." (Gen. 17:16). This promise came after we saw in Gen. 11:30 that "Sarah was barren; she had no child."

The Lesson:

Sarah's love for her God and her great faith is mentioned in Hebrews 11:11: "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised." God's promises are faithful. Though His timing is not always our timing, He will always fulfill his promises.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is it always easy to follow your husband's lead?
2. Are there things that hinder your devotion and desire to hear God's voice for your journey in life?
3. Is it hard to see the end of your journey when the present is rough?
4. Do you need faith to know God and believe He is a loving and faithful God?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Mary

BELIEVED THE UNBELIEVABLE. (Luke 1:34-38) ~written by Lori Moody

The Story:

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a young woman of pure character who chose to believe God and trust Him in spite of her circumstances. She embraced God's specific calling for her life and expected God's greater blessing. Mary was a young Jewish maiden, a virgin, who was engaged to a man named Joseph. One day, as she was going about her daily life, an angel was sent from God to tell her she would be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. Mary was perplexed by the announcement, not understanding how that could happen. She asked the question in verse 34, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" This was not an expression of unbelief but an expression of faith: she knew it would happen but did not know *how* it could happen. The angel Gabriel then explained it would be a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit of God.

This high calling came at a great price for Mary. What about her reputation? What would come of her future with Joseph? Would her very life be at stake (Deut. 22:23)? Mary responded to her calling with great courage. She was submissive to the Word of God, believing, "For with God nothing will be impossible." She surrendered herself to the will of God, "Let it be to me according to your word." She surrendered everything: her reputation, her future, and her life. Later she would sing a song of praise to her Savior (Luke 1:46-55) and would courageously identify with Jesus at the foot of the cross (John 19:25).

The Lesson:

As a woman, Mary must not be overemphasized by elevating her to the position of God. Likewise, she must not be underemphasized by ignoring her altogether. Mary played a great role in the legacy of womankind. She was the instrument God used to bring life back into the human race. She was fully human as seen in her anxieties and in her need to accept Christ as her own personal Savior. Like Mary, God wants each of us to be women of pure character, ready to receive the blessings of God. He calls each of us with a specific high calling, drawing us in to fully trust Him in full faith and in spite of the circumstances. We must respond as Mary--with great courage, submitting to the Word of God and surrendering to the will of God, fully expecting God's greater blessing. Mary chose to believe the unbelievable plan God had for her. Because she did, Mary gave birth to the Savior of the World. Likewise, when God asks us to do something, we must go forward in faith and trust.

Questions to Consider:

1. Have you placed your faith and trust in Christ? If not, what is hindering you?
2. Will you live a life of character God can bless?
2. Has God called you to an uncomfortable circumstance? How will you respond?
4. Will you surrender yourself in total obedience to God's Will?



"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
Matthew 22:36-40

Esther

RISK TAKER, HEART FOR HER PEOPLE AND WILLINGNESS TO LAY HER LIFE ON THE LINE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS. (Esther 1-10, Romans 8:28, Nehemiah 1:4-11, Mark 12:30-31; John 15:13)

~written by Carrie Bond

The Story:

As a little girl, Esther likely had dreams of what her life would be like. Little did she know she would be orphaned, adopted, and later whisked away to become queen. Amazingly, Esther refused bitterness and instead embraced the teachings of her God, Jehovah. She allowed God to work all the circumstances for good and His glory. At the pinnacle of Esther's story, God put all the pieces together: her life experiences, her love for her people, and most importantly, her devotion and determination to know and follow God.

Like the prophet Nehemiah, when faced with a huge risk, Esther knew such a critical moment required much prayer and fasting. The wise words of Mordecai likely rang in her ears, reminding her of the choices she had: be part of what God was doing and *wanted* to do through her-or simply ignore it. Both choices came with a tremendous cost. Standing in God's strength, Esther chose to risk her own life for the sake of her people and walk in obedience! What a beautiful picture of the greatest command Jesus gave and modeled: to love God with everything and love others as yourself, even to the point of laying down your life.

Esther's heart was devoted to following God. She knew the ways of God and how to seek His will: through godly counsel, prayer, and fasting. Esther looked beyond herself and allowed God to use her. She had the determination to be obedient and experience all God was doing. Esther laid aside all the rights and privileges that came with being queen for God's greater purposes. As a result, God blessed her and saved her people.

The Lesson:

We have the same choice to make today. God is always at work and desires for us to join Him. It requires us to be both single-minded in following His purposes and to be determined, no matter the risk, to walk in obedience. Incredibly, when we make those choices ... God moves through us, blesses others and in His graciousness, blesses us.

Questions to Consider:

1. Has God asked you to do something you consider risky?
2. How is God calling you to lay aside your rights to serve others?
3. Are you willing to step out in obedience to be part of what God is doing?



