The WOMAN'S STUDY BIBLE

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FOREWORD

Praise od for His Story as it is recorded in His ord. My sincere prayer is that this volume will become a tool to guide you in listening to the voice of od as He speaks through His ord.

The thrill of hearing Him speak today from this old Book, His Holy ord, has not left me. It has been life-changing. However, for many the Bible may be something of a closed door. Although its stories are all fairly familiar, there seems to be a great void of understanding exactly what these stories can mean for Christians living in the present day. Many people who read od s ord believe it; they ust don t believe it works for them today. It does ou will find the factual information in introductory materials, annotations, topical notes, portraits, charts, and maps in *he Woman's Study Bible* to be helpful in showing you how it works.

Truth does not change (2 Tim. 3:16). hile experts in science, technology, geology, and theology are constantly changing their findings and conclusions, od s ord has remained unchanged since it was written thousands of years ago. Various challenges may be made to the historical accounts found in the Bible, but you are going to be excited as you begin to read reasonable explanations for many of your questions. There will, of course, be some things, that is, the mysteries of od, for which there are no answers at this time, in this life. The challenge of these mysteries will lead you to worship a od whose ways are past finding out, whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Rom. 11:33; Is. 55:9).

Ask od to open your eyes that you might see Him in a fresh way and open your ears that you might hear His voice speaking to you as you read His ord, and let *he Woman's Study Bible* be your guide.

Anne raham Lot

Foreword to the Full Color Edition

ear Reader,

he Woman's Study Bible has blessed and touched countless women since it was first published over twenty years ago. hile the timeless study content contributed by an extraordinary team of women who are top scholars and influential teachers remains as timelessly applicable as ever, we felt that a redesign could help this valuable resource continue reaching women today. *he Woman's Study Bible* has long been the gold standard in women s study Bibles in terms of content. ith the present edition, it is also the most beautiful study Bible for women, re-presenting the rich study material and invaluable mentoring content for women of all ages. It is with great pleasure that we present to you *he Woman's Study Bible, Full Color Edition.* Our prayerful hope is that you will grow in a deeper knowledge and love for the Lord as He reveals Himself to you through these pages.

n Christ,
he Publishers

The Woman's Study Bible

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INTRODUCTION

The Woman's Study Bible is a unique tool for opening od s ord to women through a comprehensive study of Scripture prepared by women for women on subects important to women. Recent history has awakened a growing awareness of and sensitivity to women and their concerns their value in being made in the image of od, their innermost personal needs, and their challenging opportunities to serve the Lord. The Bible is one of the most important means by which a woman s identity and her place in society should be defined. The Creator presented His perfect plan, but Satan used his wiles through a woman to bring sin into the world. od countered this satanic attack by using a woman to give birth to the Savior who would provide redemption. A world distorted by the presence of sin and evil is full of suffering and pain, but od and His Holy ord are not responsible for creating the in ustices and tragedies suffered by women or men.

omen in the ancient world did not have an easy or perfect life, but Israelite women were better off than their contemporaries. The Law of Israel was designed to protect women, their rights, and their freedom (eut. 21:10 14; 22:13, 28). Israelite women did have certain rights as well as greater freedom, more varied pursuits, and better social status than the women from pagan nations. The vast ma ority of women primarily administered their households and cared for their husbands and children.

Jesus did not hesitate to teach women and to use them in parables and illustrations. omen were present at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:49); they prepared the Lord s body for burial (Luke 23:56); they were first at the tomb on Resurrection morning (Luke 24:1); they were the first to bear testimony to the Resurrection (Luke 24:9, 10); their faith and prayers were vital to the growth of the early church (Rom. 16:1). verywhere Christianity has gone, the status of women has improved.

In 1895, li abeth Cady Stanton published *he Woman's Bible* with intent to achieve freedom from what she alleged to be the oppression of Scripture. She commented on passages of particular interest to women and removed verses she considered tainted with a male bias. She was motivated by an agenda based on her own experience and was grasping for a position that would place her *o er* Scripture. This position helped lay the ideological foundation for a feministic theology that makes individual conscience and personal experience the ultimate basis for interpreting Scripture. A century later, the editorial committee of *he Woman's Study Bible* has chosen to line up under the authority of Scripture. e have followed an ob ective approach. e have sought to understand the message of the Bible, while committing ourselves to live out its principles in faith and practice. e are bound to the absolute veracity and uniqueness of od s ord. e do not need to twist or rewrite Scripture, to redefine its words, or to choose what we will accept as authoritative, which would exalt human reason. Rather we are committed to dig deep into Scripture in order to find a word from od about who we are and how we are to live.

More than eighty women from many different denominations, ethnic backgrounds, and occupations comprised the editorial team. omen have worked through every step of production design and layout, typesetting, proofreading, marketing, and sales. Singles, wives, mothers, and grandmothers all have combined their training and giftedness to expend the time, energy, and creativity to produce a timeless and Christ-honoring study tool uniquely designed to meet the needs of women whatever their situation in life whether overwhelmed with family problems, frustrated from career in ustices, burdened with the trials of everyday living, challenged with making life-changing decisions, or merely motivated to seek a word from od.

Before any research was begun or manuscript written, these guidelines were prayerfully adopted:

distin ti e e e esis pulls out the meaning of the text instead of reading into the text personal whims.

ntuiti e s holarshi combines the

discernment of intuition with the discipline of scholarship, bringing a new dimension to evangelical interpretation. *Nurturin sensiti ity* brings new and exciting ways to encourage and inspire. *entorin riendshi s* undergird spiritual bonding, finding more common ground than polarity in a quest to understand and interpret Scripture. *Creati e ser i e* links mind and heart to present inspiration and guidance that is fresh and relevant.

The features of *he Woman's Study Bible* are skillfully woven together and easily accessed through an extensive referencing system. The *arti les* provide thought provoking scholarship, devotional meditation, and the practical development of faith.

ntrodu tory material accompanies each book of the Bible with information about the author, date, setting, purpose, audience, literary characteristics, and themes. The outline will lead you through a study of the book in a systematic way. The *annotations* placed in footnotes are helpful in drawing out of the text necessary information to explain difficult passages, idiomatic phrases, or obscure words as well as in identifying places and people.

The *to i al notes* on sub ects of interest to women of all ages and in all stages of life have been prepared based upon principles found in Scripture, enabling and motivating you to make personal application of od s truth to your own problems.

More than one hundred *ortraits* bring to life the women of the Bible, giving a brief glimpse of life in the ancient world, presenting their problems and how they solved them, showing both the good and the bad, sharing the results of doing something od s way in contrast to going your own way (Is. 53:6). e are awed by the faithfulness of many of these women to doing od s work, to obeying His ord, and to making significant contributions to the kingdom. Many of these Bible women will become your examples, your inspiration, your mentors, and your friends.

The *harts and ma s* have been prepared for the unique focus of this volume. Charts include the development of family trees and treatment of other sub ects with special prominence given to women.

ns irational uotations from women of many generations are found throughout. The most important part of studying od s ord is always a personal reading of the text of Scripture and a willingness to let its words speak to you and perhaps change your life.

Binding all these elements together is an index, an alphabetical *uide to the s e ial eatures* all the topical notes, portraits, charts, maps, and many of the sub ects covered in annotations. In the extensive cross-referencing system, topical notes and portraits are noted by book and chapter at the point of reference; charts and maps can be easily located through the alphabetical guide. A *on ordan e* of important words in the Bible is also included.

This volume will provide rewarding study for the serious Bible student, while also offering a meaningful introduction to the study of od s ord for any woman who would come reverently to Scripture with an open heart. The inexhaustible ord of od will introduce you to the Father and His love; it will unveil and give understanding of His will; it will reveal His Law and principles for living; it will offer intellectual challenges for your mind, moral values for your will, and spiritual refreshment for your heart. For every woman who opens the Holy ord of od, *is story* of redemption can become *her story* of deliverance. Let *he Woman's Study Bible* become a catalyst for changing your life by helping you unlock od s ord, share His promises, and offer His challenges.

orothy Kelley Patterson

PREFACE TO THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION

Purpose

In the preface to the 1611 edition, the translators of the Authori ed Version, known popularly as the King James Bible, state that it was not their purpose to make a new translation . . . but to make a good one better. Indebted to the earlier work of illiam Tyndale and others, they saw their best contribution to consist in revising and enhancing the excellence of the nglish versions which had sprung from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In harmony with the purpose of the King James scholars, the translators and editors of the present work have not pursued a goal of innovation. They have perceived the Holy Bible, New King James Version, as a continuation of the labors of the earlier translators, thus unlocking for today s readers the spiritual treasures found especially in the Authori ed Version of the Holy Scriptures.

A Living Legacy

For more than four hundred years, and throughout several revisions of its nglish form, the King James Bible has been deeply revered among the nglish-speaking peoples of the world. The precision of translation for which it is historically renowned, and its ma esty of style, have enabled that monumental version of the ord of od to become the mainspring of the religion, language, and legal foundations of our civili ation.

Although the li abethan period and our own era share in eal for technical advance, the former period was more aggressively devoted to classical learning. Along with this awakened concern for the classics came a flourishing companion interest in the Scriptures, an interest that was enlivened by the conviction that the manuscripts were providentially handed down and were a trustworthy record of the inspired ord of od. The King James translators were committed to producing an nglish Bible that would be a precise translation, and by no means a paraphrase or a broadly approximate rendering. On the one hand, the scholars were almost as familiar with the original languages of the Bible as with their native nglish. On the other hand, their reverence for the divine Author and His ord assured a translation of the Scriptures in which only a principle of utmost accuracy could be accepted.

In 1786 Catholic scholar Alexander eddes said of the King James Bible, If accuracy and strictest attention to the letter of the text be supposed to constitute an excellent version, this is of all versions the most excellent. eorge Bernard Shaw became a literary legend in the twentieth century because of his severe and often humorous criticisms of our most cherished values. Surprisingly, however, Shaw pays the following tribute to the scholars commissioned by King James: The translation was extraordinarily well done because to the translators what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the ord of od divinely revealed through His chosen and expressly inspired scribes. In this conviction they carried out their work with boundless reverence and care and achieved a beautifully artistic result. History agrees with these estimates. Therefore, while seeking to unveil the excellent *orm* of the traditional nglish Bible, special care has also been taken in the present edition to preserve the work of *re ision* which is the legacy of the 1611 translators.

Complete Equivalence in Translation

here new translation has been necessary in the New King James Version, the most complete representation of the original has been rendered by considering the history of usage and etymology of words in their contexts. This principle of complete equivalence seeks to preserve *all* of the information in the text, while presenting it in good literary form. ynamic equivalence, a recent procedure in Bible translation, com-

monly results in paraphrasing where a more literal rendering is needed to reflect a specific and vital sense. For example, complete equivalence truly renders the original text in expressions such as lifted her voice and wept (en. 21:16); I gave you cleanness of teeth (Amos 4:6); Jesus met them, saying, Re oice (Matt. 28:9); and oman, what does your concern have to do with Me (John 2:4). Complete equivalence translates fully, in order to provide an nglish text that is both accurate and readable.

In keeping with the principle of complete equivalence, it is the policy to translate inter ections which are commonly omitted in modern language renderings of the Bible. As an example, the inter ection *behold*, in the older King James editions, continues to have a place in nglish usage, especially in dramatically calling attention to a spectacular scene or an event of profound importance such as the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Consequently, *behold* is retained for these occasions in the present edition. However, the Hebrew and reek originals for this word can be translated variously, depending on the circumstances in the passage. Therefore, in addition to *behold*, words such as *in deed*, *loo* , *see*, and *surely* are also rendered to convey the appropriate sense suggested by the context in each case.

In faithfulness to od and to our readers, it was deemed appropriate that all participating scholars sign a statement affirming their belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, and in the inerrancy of the original autographs.

Devotional Quality

The King James scholars readily appreciated the intrinsic beauty of divine revelation. They accordingly disciplined their talents to render well-chosen nglish words of their time, as well as a graceful, often musical arrangement of language, which has stirred the hearts of Bible readers through the years. The translators, the committees, and the editors of the present edition, while sensitive to the late-twentieth-century nglish idiom, and while adhering faithfully to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and reek texts, have sought to maintain those lyrical and devotional qualities that are so highly regarded in the Authori ed Version. This devotional quality is especially apparent in the poetic and prophetic books, although even the relatively plain style of the ospels and pistles cannot strictly be likened, as sometimes suggested, to modern newspaper style. The Koine reek of the New Testament is influenced by the Hebrew background of the writers, for whom even the gospel narratives were not merely flat utterance, but often song in various degrees of rhythm.

The Style

Students of the Bible applaud the timeless devotional character of our historic Bible. et it is also universally understood that our language, like all living languages, has undergone profound change since 1611. Subsequent revisions of the King James Bible have sought to keep abreast of changes in nglish speech. The present work is a further step toward this ob ective. here obsolescence and other reading difficulties exist, present-day vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar have been carefully integrated. ords representing ancient ob ects, such as *hariot* and *hy la tery*, have no modern substitutes and are therefore retained.

A special feature of the New King James Version is its conformity to the thought flow of the 1611 Bible. The reader discovers that the sequence and selection of words, phrases, and clauses of the new edition, while much clearer, are so close to the traditional that there is remarkable ease in listening to the reading of either edition while following with the other.

In the discipline of translating biblical and other ancient languages, a standard method of transliteration, that is, the nglish spelling of untranslated words, such as names of persons and places, has never been commonly adopted. In keeping with the design of the present work, the King James spelling of untranslated words is retained, although made uniform throughout. For example, instead of the spellings *saiah* and *Eli ah* in the Old Testament, and *Esaias* and *Elias* in the New Testament, *saiah* and *Eli ah* now appear in both Testaments.

King James doctrinal and theological terms, for example, *ro itiation*, *usti i ation*, and *san ti i ation*, are generally

familiar to nglish-speaking peoples. Such terms have been retained except where the original language indicates need for a more precise translation.

Readers of the Authori ed Version will immediately be struck by the absence of several pronouns: *thee*, *thou*, and *ye* are replaced by the simple *you*, while *your* and *yours* are substituted for *thy* and *thine* as applicable. *hee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* were once forms of address to express a special relationship to human as well as divine persons. These pronouns are no longer part of our language. However, reverence for od in the present work is preserved by capitali ing pronouns, including *ou*, *our*, and *ours*, which refer to Him. Additionally, capitali ation of these pronouns benefits the reader by clearly distinguishing divine and human persons referred to in a passage. ithout such capitali ation the distinction is often obscure, because the antecedent of a pronoun is not always clear in the nglish translation.

In addition to the pronoun usages of the seventeenth century, the *eth* and *est* verb endings, so familiar in the earlier King James editions, are now obsolete. Unless a speaker is schooled in these verb endings, there is common difficulty in selecting the correct form to be used with a given sub ect of the verb in vocal prayer. That is, should we use *lo e*, *lo eth*, or *lo est do*, *doeth*, *doest*, or *dost ha e*, *hath*, or *hast* Because these forms are obsolete, contemporary nglish usage has been substituted for the previous verb endings.

In older editions of the King James Version, the frequency of the connective *and* far exceeded the limits of present nglish usage. Also, biblical linguists agree that the Hebrew and reek original words for this con unction may commonly be translated otherwise, depending on the immediate context. Therefore, instead of *and*, alternatives such as *also*, *but*, *ho e er*, *no* , *so*, *then*, and *thus* are accordingly rendered in the present edition, when the original language permits.

The real character of the Authori ed Version does not reside in its archaic pronouns or verbs or other grammatical forms of the seventeenth century, but rather in the care taken by its scholars to impart the letter and spirit of the original text in a ma estic and reverent style.

The Format

The format of the New King James Version is designed to enhance the vividness and devotional quality of the Holy Scriptures:

Sub ect headings assist the reader to identify topics and transitions in the biblical content.

ords or phrases in *itali s* indicate expressions in the original language which require clarification by additional nglish words, as also done throughout the history of the King James Bible.

Oblique type in the New Testament indicates a quotation from the Old Testament.

Prose is divided into paragraphs to indicate the structure of thought.

Poetry is structured as contemporary verse to reflect the poetic form and beauty of the passage in the original language.

The covenant name of od was usually translated from the Hebrew as Lor d or od (using capital letters as shown) in the King James Old Testament. This tradition is maintained. In the present edition the name is so capitali ed whenever the covenant name is quoted in the New Testament from a passage in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament Text

The Hebrew Bible has come down to us through the scrupulous care of ancient scribes who copied the original text in successive generations. By the sixth century a.d. the scribes were succeeded by a group known as the Masoretes, who continued to preserve the sacred Scriptures for another five hundred years in a form known as the Masoretic Text. Babylonia, Palestine, and Tiberias were the main centers of Masoretic activity; but by the tenth century a.d. the Masoretes of Tiberias, led by the family of ben Asher, gained the ascendancy. Through subsequent editions, the ben Asher text became in the twelfth century the only recogni ed form of the Hebrew Scriptures.

aniel Bomberg printed the first Rabbinic Bible in 1516 17; that work was followed in 1524 25 by a second edition prepared by Jacob ben Chayyim and also published by

Bomberg. The text of ben Chayyim was adopted in most subsequent Hebrew Bibles, including those used by the King James translators. The ben Chayyim text was also used for the first two editions of Rudolph Kittel s *Biblia ebrai a* of 1906 and 1912. In 1937 Paul Kahle published a third edition of *Biblia ebrai a*. This edition was based on the oldest dated manuscript of the ben Asher text, the Leningrad Manuscript B19a (a.d. 1008), which Kahle regarded as superior to that used by ben Chayyim.

For the New King James Version the text used was the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia ebrai a*, with frequent comparisons being made with the Bomberg edition of 1524 25. The Septuagint (reek) Version of the Old Testament and the Latin Vulgate also were consulted. In addition to referring to a variety of ancient versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New King James Version draws on the resources of relevant manuscripts from the ead Sea caves. In the few places where the Hebrew was so obscure that the 1611 King James was compelled to follow one of the versions, but where information is now available to resolve the problems, the New King James Version follows the Hebrew text. Significant variations are recorded in the New King James translators notes.

The New Testament Text

There is more manuscript support for the New Testament than for any other body of ancient literature. Over five thousand reek, eight thousand Latin, and many more manuscripts in other languages attest the integrity of the New Testament. There is only one basic New Testament used by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox, by conservatives and liberals. Minor variations in hand copying have appeared through the centuries, before mechanical printing began about a.d. 1450.

Some variations exist in the spelling of reek words, in word order, and in similar details. These ordinarily do not show up in translation and do not affect the sense of the text in any way.

Other manuscript differences such as omission or inclusion of a word or a clause, and two paragraphs in the ospels, should not overshadow the overwhelming degree of *a reement* which exists among the ancient records. Bible readers may be assured that the most important differences in nglish New Testaments of today are due, not to manuscript divergence, but to the way in which translators view the task of translation: How literally should the text be rendered How does the translator view the matter of biblical inspiration oes the translator adopt a paraphrase when a literal rendering would be quite clear and more to the point The New King James Version follows the historic precedent of the Authori ed Version in maintaining a literal approach to translation, except where the idiom of the original language cannot be translated directly into our tongue.

The King James New Testament was based on the traditional text of the reek-speaking churches, first published in 1516, and later called the Textus Receptus or Received Text. Although based on the relatively few available manuscripts, these were representative of many more which existed at the time but only became known later. In the late nineteenth century, B. estcott and F. Hort taught that this text had been officially edited by the fourth-century church, but a total lack of historical evidence for this event has forced a revision of the theory. It is now widely held that the By antine Text that largely supports the Textus Receptus has as much right as the Alexandrian or any other tradition to be weighed in determining the text of the New Testament.

Since the 1880s most contemporary translations of the New Testament have relied upon a relatively few manuscripts discovered chiefly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such translations depend primarily on two manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, because of their greater age. The reek text obtained by using these sources and the related papyri (our most ancient manuscripts) is known as the Alexandrian Text. However, some scholars have grounds for doubting the faithfulness of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, since they often disagree with one another, and Sinaiticus exhibits excessive omission.

A third viewpoint of New Testament scholarship holds that the best text is based on the consensus of the ma ority of existing reek manuscripts. This text is called the

Ma ority Text. Most of these manuscripts are in substantial agreement. ven though many are late, and none is earlier than the fifth century, usually their readings are verified by papyri, ancient versions, quotations from the early church fathers, or a combination of these. The Ma ority Text is similar to the Textus Receptus, but it corrects those readings which have little or no support in the reek manuscript tradition.

Today scholars agree that the science of New Testament textual criticism is in a state of flux. Very few scholars still favor the Textus Receptus as such, and then often for its historical prestige as the text of Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, and the King James Version. For about a century most have followed a Critical Text (so called because it is edited according to specific principles of textual criticism) which depends heavily upon the Alexandrian type of text. More recently many have abandoned this Critical Text (which is quite similar to the one edited by estcott and Hort) for one that is more eclectic. Finally, a small but growing number of scholars prefer the Ma ority Text, which is close to the traditional text except in the Revelation.

In light of these facts, and also because the New King James Version is the fifth revision of a historic document translated from specific reek texts, the editors decided to retain the traditional text in the body of the New Testament and to indicate ma or Critical and Ma ority Text variant readings in the translators notes. Although these variations are duly indicated in the translators notes of the present edition, it is most important to emphasi e that fully eighty-five percent of the New Testament text is the same in the Textus Receptus, the Alexandrian Text, and the Ma ority Text.

New King James Translators' Notes

Significant textual explanations, alternate translations, and New Testament citations of Old Testament passages are supplied in the New King James translators notes.

Important textual variants in the Old Testament are identified in a standard form.

The textual notes in the present edition of the New Testament make no evaluation of readings, but do clearly indicate the manuscript sources of readings. They ob ectively present the facts without such tendentious remarks as the best manuscripts omit or the most reliable manuscripts read. Such notes are value udgments that differ according to varying viewpoints on the text. By giving a clearly defined set of variants the New King James Version benefits readers of all textual persuasions.

here significant variations occur in the New Testament reek manuscripts, textual notes are classified as follows:

NU-Text

These variations from the traditional text generally represent the Alexandrian or gyptian type of text described previously in The New Testament Text. They are found in the Critical Text published in the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland reek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Societies fourth edition (U), hence the acronym, NU-Text.

M-Text

This symbol indicates points of variation in the Ma ority Text from the traditional text, as also previously discussed in The New Testament Text. It should be noted that M stands for whatever reading is printed in the published *ree Ne estament ordin to the a ority e t*, whether supported by overwhelming, strong, or only a divided ma ority textual tradition.

The textual notes reflect the scholarship of the past two centuries and will assist the reader to observe the variations between the different manuscript traditions of the New Testament. Such information is generally not available in nglish translations of the New Testament.

SPECIAL DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Aram. Aramaic

Bomberg the 1524–35 edition of the Hebrew Old Testament, published by Daniel Bomberg (see article, The New King James Version)

ch., chs. chapter, chapters

DSS Dead Sea Scrolls

f, ff following verse, following verses

Gr., Gk. Greek

Heb. Hebrew

Kethib (Aram., lit. "written"). The written words of the Hebrew Old Testament preserved by the Masoretes.

Lat. Latin

lit. literally

LXX Septuagint—an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek

M-Text Majority Text (see article, The New King James Version)

MT-Text Masoretic Text—the traditional Hebrew Old Testament (see article, The New King James Version)

NU-Text The most prominent text of the Greek New Testament (see article, The New King James Version)

Qere (Aram., lit. "read"). Words read aloud that differ from the written words, in the Masoretic tradition of the Hebrew Old Testament (see *Kethib*)

Samaritan A variant Hebrew edition of the

Pentateuch books of Moses used by the Samaritan community

Targum An Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament

Textus Receptus "Received Text" (see article, The New King James Version)

v., vv., verse, verses

Vulgate An ancient text of the Bible into Latin, translated and edited by Jerome

GOD CARES FOR WOMEN

Eta Linnemann

In my pre-conversion life, I bitterly fought for women's equality in "spiritual office." The thorn of embitterment was ever driven into me anew by my so-called "brothers in ministry," especially by those who were my mental inferiors and possessed no other merit than the privilege of wearing trousers on the basis of their physical constitution. If my achievements had not been any better than theirs, I would not have made it even into the position in which I had to bear, of all things, the lifelong title of "lady curate" (assistant), while my male colleagues after one to two years exchanged the title of "curate" for that of "pastor."

At the general conventions, I was wounded with unkind regularity by such "brothers" in ministry in that at least one of them, or more likely an entire group, apprised me of the fact that the problem of women in ministry would indeed be solved if each of the women would marry a minister. That was the twofold wounding. Had I completed an entire course of theological study, including the two theological barrier examinations and even taken a doctor's degree, only to engage myself with children and kitchen as the wife of a minister? Even if I had wanted that—wouldn't I have only had the remotest possibility for it, now that a considerable portion of the men in my own age group had been killed during the Second World War on the battlefields of Europe?

My dear sisters, I felt that the fight for equal rights for women had been entrusted to me, along with the pain that these inequities caused. This *fight* was terminated with my preconversion life because now I am prepared to submit myself to God's Word—even to that which stands written therein concerning the woman. The *suffering,* however, was not yet ended thereby. It hurt just as badly when a "ministering brother" made it clear to the sisters, with arrogance and a pasha's behavior, that the assignment of all women was to work with their hands and to serve the brothers with their time and resources. Perhaps later the Lord would give women a prophetic office. That the "ministering brother" had made it up to cook in his former life, whereas the sister had made it to a double doctorate in theology and a professorship was only marginally noted.

The reaction I faced was a rebellion, albeit resisted, against this God and a deep depression over my misfortune to have been created a woman. So it would have remained, had not God Himself taken up my case. I had begged Him to allow me to be done with this situation, which I could not resolve because I could find no acquiescence within myself to the role that He as Creator had assigned to me. Years later I grasped that this role was not simply identical with that which this "ministering brother" had ascribed to me. That God in the meantime had drastically interfered in the life of this brother should only be noted in passing, since it is not the most important thing.

God intervened. He healed me of my bitterness and the rebellion against being a woman. Renewed by *His grace*, I became a fulfilled woman—happy, contented, and full of thanksgiving. Perhaps this path is not reproducible for everyone. I am not at all saying that God has the same path in mind for others, but I do desire to share my testimony as a witness to His grace in my own life.

In my quiet time, I read Deuteronomy 21:10–14; through this often overlooked regulation concerning the treatment of women who had become spoils of war, God healed my heart. By means of these unlikely verses, His concern and love toward women became overpoweringly known to me.

Clearly, in my own heart, this regulation had been given in the midst of the raw reality of a fallen creation. The women of the vanquished became spoils to the victors. After a centuries-long Christian experience, indeed now this tragedy is no longer the usual thing, although even in this century, it became the gruesome experience of countless German women, who were delivered up defenseless to an incited, inflamed red beast called an "army."

Among all peoples it was self-evident that a woman who had become the spoils of war could come to

be used at will as a slave of lust or labor. But God gave to His people totally different regulations, which served to protect the human worth of such captive women.

> When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.
>
> (Deut. 21:10–14)

What tenderness and sympathetic understanding call out from this admonition! The victor was not allowed to rush upon booty; he had to approach the prisoner of war with respect. He had to decide whether to retain her as worker or to take her as wife. Everything else was excluded. If he should take her as wife, he was henceforth not allowed to treat her as a prisoner. He must provide her with clothing because she was supposed to lay aside the clothing of her captivity. He was to allow her a full month of mourning, during which she was to be permitted to mourn and weep, according to proper decorum, for all of the relatives she lost in the war.

How God knows our feelings; how He respects them! With what love has He arranged the individual details that led to the restoration of the woman! She should be permitted to become whole again. She should have the opportunity to earn a positive attitude from her proprietor, who would perhaps then want to become her husband. The respect with which he had to treat this woman made marriage possible and even constituted the prerequisite for her success.

With what love and care had God personally taken precaution in the case of the failure of this marriage, which indeed stood beneath particular burdens because it took place across national and cultural lines! How He lovingly took up the woman Himself, guarded against her being reduced from the position of wife to that of bondslave, and also did not permit her to be treated as an object from which money could be earned at will. Her husband was allowed to put her away only by respecting her as a free person having full disposition over herself. Just as he himself was only allowed to approach her as a husband, with full respect for her personhood, so he was only allowed to dismiss her with full respect for her personhood.

How very much does God love women! How He respects us as persons of equal value to the man in that He has expended such care to decree these regulations concerning our protection! I can believe His disposition concerning me is that I should be a woman—together with what all that means according to God's Word—for my ultimate good. Once I began to accept His decree concerning me—to be a woman, then, little by little, I also have been made conscious of the good that He has thereby intended for me.

THE BALANCED LIFE: RECONCILING PERSONAL FAITH WITH PRACTICING DOGMA

Hilary McFarlane

Dame Julian of Norwich said, "Prayer unites the soul to God." To know God is possible, and such knowledge is found through personal devotional life and spiritual practice. The private and personal dimension of spiritual life is important. It is woven throughout the Bible in the lives of different women of faith. Yet, at the same time, equally viable within Scripture is a very public dimension to the life of the believer and in the history of the church. The life of faith is not a purely subjective one; it is not allowed to follow its own private thoughts and opinions without restriction. Rather, the believer is instructed what she is to believe and how she is to live, sometimes very clearly and directly with little room for dissent and at other times more obliquely, with a wider horizon for personal input. The books of Leviticus or Deuteronomy or Paul's exhortations to the Christians living in Ephesus or Galatia identify the various rules and regulations given for living as the people of God. The Bible and subsequent Christian witness, then, make a clear distinction between private devotion and public testimony.

What is more problematic, however, is the way the two are combined. One can easily be dismissed in favor of the other, such as to insist that the personal is more important than the public, that private spirituality takes precedence over the teachings of the church, which may be defined as doctrine or dogma. Does God's revelation come first to the individual, then expand into wider dogma? Do words of doctrine or dogma only serve to express what we mean and make it possible for us to express what we already know and experience? This may well be true, but it is also true that without the boundaries of dogma and doctrine, we are prey to flights of fancy that, historically, have led groups of people into serious error. Without the guidelines of dogma, we are adrift on a sea of relativism and uncertainty. While each believer has a personal and unique testimony, each must be read against the backdrop of a whole history of testimonies that constitute what is believed.

Faith, then, clearly requires guidelines: Personal devotion and faith need public doctrine and dogma. If this is true, how do we reconcile dogma and doxology, faith and practice?

Perhaps this is best answered by first identifying what is meant by faith. Faith is identified as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This is clearly set within the context of *relationship*, the relationship between God and each individual who has dared to trust God despite what may be touched, seen, heard, or tasted—the criteria of materialism. For each of us, this assurance is based on things about which we have been told, that which has been handed to us (doctrine). This is not blind faith: It is intelligible and based on very specific content that we together can identify as our common belief.

Faith, then, can be identified as the actual relationship that exists between the believer and God and should be distinguished from three very specific issues that will be unpacked through the lives of women in the Bible:

1) *Legalism*—the relationship between faith and practice that rests on following rules and regulations;
2) *Propositionalism*—the belief that the content of faith is made up of statements that cannot change;
3) *Secularism*—what one believes must be correlated with the law of the land.

LEGALISM

One of the greatest dangers to faith is the temptation to believe that what can be seen is the real and that the unseen is less real. Paul makes the point that for the believer what cannot be seen is the most important, for *it* is what is *real* (2 Cor. 4:18). This sounds a bit strange until we realize that Paul is talking about the life of faith: Faith is the substance of things *unseen*. The life of faith is characterized by a

constant and firm belief that something will happen. If we let go of this, then we begin to trust what we can see. When this occurs, we have taken a very small step toward legalism because we can see when people are obeying rules and subscribing to regulations. In turn, we can also see when they are not! When this happens, we begin to judge such people by what can be *seen*. The dogmas of correct behavior cancel out the belief or faith that a person may change or that a person may *not* be as she appears.

One such example of the triumph of faith over dogma in this context can be seen in the way Jesus related to a Greek woman who had a demon-possessed daughter (Mark 7:24–30). Although according to Jewish laws Jesus did not need to relate to this woman, He chose to do so. He responded to someone who was unclean—a Greek, and a woman at that—but one who had a faithful heart. Here was someone who had faith even though Jewish dogma condemned her. She did not let the rules and regulations of the day stop her from receiving Jesus. She did not allow legalism to rob her of her desire to have her daughter healed.

PROPOSITIONALISM

Those within religious circles have a tendency to want to control God. Dogmatic statements about the character of God and what He does offer little room for true faith in the unseen or the invisible. Belief in what is commonly held by the majority often is party to the tendency to legalism.

While it is very important to have *fundamentals,* that is, certain values and beliefs that remain constant, if these beliefs become rigid and fixed, then we often lose any meaningful space for faith. Once this space has disappeared, faith evaporates.

The triumph of faith over propositionalism is no clearer than in the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. In the example of Mary, we see a belief that God is higher than what is accepted as the norm. In Mary's case, God is higher than science.

A young woman, not yet married and thus with no sexual relationship with a man, is told that she will conceive and bear a son. Mary asks a natural question concerning the means by which this will happen, since she is not married. In addition, as an unwed woman, to become pregnant would have devastating social implications. However, she is told simply that, while humanly impossible, the birth of a child would not be impossible with God. The story of Mary has become so familiar that we can lose sight of the tremendous step of faith she took in saying, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). In these words, we are confronted with the triumph of faith over propositions that would say God can only do one thing and not another. For Mary, faith was very much the substance of things unseen.

SECULARISM

Communicating the gospel in ways that are intelligible to the people around us is essential. Without such communication we would have nothing to say. What destroys the relationship between faith and dogma is that which radically alters what is believed to make it palatable to the surrounding culture. The "gospel of health and wealth" is a clear example of this. The Bible challenges this kind of approach again and again.

There is one example that resonates with tension and excitement as the story of faith over secularism unfolds. Rahab the prostitute refused to conform to the standards around her but took charge of her destiny in a remarkable way (Josh. 2:1–21). Perhaps a rather scheming woman and probably opportunistic enough to recognize her moment, Rahab tacitly acknowledged that the God of the Israelites was greater than her gods. She protected the Israelite spies, lying to her own people concerning the whereabouts of the spies in return for protection from the Israelites during their ensuing invasion.

What sets Rahab the prostitute apart is the fact that she, too, had faith in the unseen and marked her behavior accordingly, so much so that her story is recorded in Scripture, and she is commended for her faith. She did not demonstrate blind allegiance to the standards and norms of her society. Rather, she chose to believe what she had heard concerning the God of the Israelites. Turning her back on her own culture, Rahab found the true God. Despite her dubious profession, Rahab is marked as a woman who, in a rather circuitous way, stands as an outstanding example of one who opposed what was familiar and trusted in the unseen.

The intention of Scripture does not appear to reconcile absolutely faith and dogma. Rather, the two should be held in tension as the individual believer wrestles with the life of faith and appropriates the Word of God for herself.

See also notes on Access to God (Rom. 10); Priesthood of the Believer (1 Pet. 2)

WHAT THEY LEFT BEHIND: WOMEN, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND THE BIBLE

Marsha A. Ellis Smith

Many of the topical notes and annotations in this Bible have information that deals with women's lives during Bible times. What kind of clothes did women wear? Did they wear makeup? What kind of foods did they cook? Did they have perfume? Many questions such as these have been answered. The purpose of this article is to give some idea of how the answers to these questions about women in Bible times are derived.

At one level, archaeology is a bit like the search for a missing person, which is a very difficult, time-consuming, and painstaking process. The search would begin in the home of the missing person with what the person had left behind. The likes, dislikes, and everyday activities of the person would be important as would each material object and how it was used. However, in archaeology, the difficulty of being removed by thousands of years from the "missing person" and her belongings is added to that process. You now have an accurate analogy for understanding the enormous task of biblical archaeology.

What is the purpose of biblical archaeology? Its purpose is *not* to "prove" the Bible is true. That is unnecessary. Archaeology, however, can provide invaluable information on the customs and background of the biblical time period and, therefore, can be a tremendous help in understanding and interpreting the biblical material.

WOMEN ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Archaeology as a science began in the 1800s. The archaeological expeditions prior to that time were mostly treasure hunts. Although most of the names found among the more famous biblical archaeologists are male, some women have reached a high-ranking status in the world of archaeology.

Possibly the first person to excavate an artifact in the Middle East was Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope, an English noblewoman. In 1815, Lady Stanhope traveled to Ashkelon, a site near the Mediterranean Coast in Palestine, to search for gold. Instead of finding gold, she found a colossal marble statue, which she ordered smashed into pieces before she left Palestine so that the Ottomans would not think she was trying to smuggle it back to England.

Dame Kathleen Kenyon is probably the most familiar name among female biblical archaeologists. She conducted extensive excavations at Jericho from 1952 through 1958 and has made many other contributions to the world of archaeology. Among other women appearing in the history of biblical archaeology are Dorothy Garrod, noted for the work she began on Palestinian caves in the area of Mt. Carmel in 1929, and Hetty Goldman, who began excavating at ancient Tarsus (hometown of Paul) in 1934. Recent biblical archaeology has produced several significant women contributors: Ruth Amiram, whose *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* provides an invaluable tool for the study of pottery types in Israel; Crystal M. Bennett, who has worked extensively at many Edomite sites; and Carol L. Meyers, as well as many others who have also made notable contributions.

WOMEN IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Just as women have made significant contributions to the study of ancient life, the study of women in ancient life has produced several categories of finds that yield information—art, artifacts, inscriptions and extra biblical writings, and similar cultural heritages.

Art. The manner in which women were depicted in ancient art reveals much about their daily lives and their status in society. Tomb paintings from Egypt, bas-reliefs from Mesopotamia, mosaics from Israel and other Mediterranean countries, sculptures from Greece and Rome, and figurines from many of these countries give glimpses of women within these ancient cultures.

Artifacts. Thousands upon thousands of artifacts have been found in the Middle East, dating from ancient times. Although the biblical era ranges from the beginning of time through around A.D. 100, most of the artifacts that would be of interest to students of the Bible come from the time of Abraham, or around 2000 B.C., through the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Babylonian and Persian periods, and up through the Hellenistic and the Early Roman periods (ending about A.D. 70). However, sometimes an artifact from the second or third centuries A.D. yields information about the biblical period.

Women's Activities in the Home. The daily domestic duties of biblical women are the source of many material remains at excavation sites (see Luke 17:2; 22:10, 11 notes). Oil lamps of varying sizes were used for lighting in the home. Kitchens were filled with clay pots and "frying pans" of assorted sizes and shapes (both metal and pottery; see John 2:6; 4:7, notes). Grinding stones were used in the preparation of meal to be used in bread recipes. Clay ovens dating from the Iron Age have been unearthed at Megiddo and others from the New Testament period at Pompeii (see Luke 12:1, note). Olive presses provided the means to squeeze from the fruit of the olive the oil necessary for cooking.

Women's Clothing and Cosmetics. Bronze fibulae (or brooches), early precursors of the modern safety pin and a means for fastening clothing, have been unearthed at several sites in the Mediterranean area. Items thought to be buttons were later determined to be toys for children.

Jewelry, dating from both Old and New Testament times, is abundant at Middle Eastern excavations (see Ex. 28, Jewelry). Beads, bracelets, necklaces, pins, and earrings in a variety of materials, including silver, gold, and bronze, and sometimes inset with various gemstones, have been discovered at many sites. Hairpins from the Persian era (538–332 B.C.), carved from bone (usually cattle, camel, or donkey bone), have been found at Ashkelon in Israel and at many Roman sites.

Delicate bottles for ointments and perfumes from the Roman period were made from a variety of materials—bronze, glass, silver, alabaster—with the larger ones often containing oils used in the bathing process. The smaller, slender-necked perfume bottles (sometimes referred to as "tear bottles") enabled the perfume to be dispensed in drops (see Luke 7:37, note).

Cosmetic paraphernalia seems to have been very important to ancient women, particularly those of the Graeco-Roman world. Cosmetic boxes and dishes, mirrors made from both bronze and silver (see Ex. 38:8, note), bronze tweezers, spatulas used in the makeup application process, and numerous other toilet articles, many of which date from the New Testament period, have been discovered at sites throughout the Mediterranean world (see Ex. 30, Cosmetics; Esth. 2, Beauty Preparations).

At the site of Old Testament Jerusalem, ancient bathrooms have been unearthed including two toilet seats. These differ from toilet seats discovered at other locations in Israel in that each is a large block of limestone with one central hole extending from top to bottom and another smaller hole off to the side. Those at other locations are thin slabs of stone with round openings placed above shallow pits. The second smaller openings are conjectured to have been utilized as men's urinals. These date from 600–500 B.C. with probably at least one in use at the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C.

WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE HOME.

Music played an important role in the life of ancient Israel, as is evidenced in both biblical and extra-biblical references, and women evidently were integrally involved in this role (see Luke 1:46–55, note; charts, Hymns and Songs Associated With Women; Musical Instruments of the Old Testament). On Cyprus many terracotta figurines of women hand-drum players have been excavated. Israelite terracottas may have served as models for the Cypriot ones, though fewer such objects have been discovered in Israel. In the 1940s, few musical instruments were among the finds at archaeological excavations in Israel. However, by 1982, more than three hundred pieces of musical instruments and artistic representations of instruments had been found. These range in date from early Bronze times to the Byzantine period (just past New Testament times). Women's involvement in musical activity is indicated in many of these finds.

Evidence does show that some women were involved in business enterprises outside the home, although the extent to which this occurred is undetermined. One such businesswoman was Lydia, seller of purple (see Acts 16, Lydia). Archaeological finds in the last ten years have shed new light upon the purple dye industry in the Mediterranean world. The purple material was the most desirable and expensive (partially due to its colorfastness). This "Tyrian purple" was wool colored with a dye made from tiny Mediterranean

mollusks. The process and the structures involved in this industry have been thoroughly studied and excavated. Additional methods of purple dyeing utilizing plants and other materials were developed. Thyatira was a center for this purple dye industry. Thus, Lydia may have been a dealer in the Thyatira purple cloth, or she may have been an importer of the royal "Tyrian purple." Either way, she was a smart, and probably wealthy, businesswoman.

Human Remains. Bone fragments are not as abundant in Middle Eastern excavations as are other artifacts. Therefore, the discovery of bones is considered a major find. One such find occurred in Jerusalem in 1970 at the site known as "the Burnt House." As the house was excavated, it became apparent that the destruction of the house was due to fire and that the date of that burning was around A.D. 70—the time of the Roman devastation of Jerusalem. Many finds in that burned layer caused an emotional response in the archaeologists involved in the excavation. The most moving moment, however, came when the bones of a young woman in her twenties were found in a doorway of the home. She was crouched at the kitchen door and looked as if she had collapsed as she was trying to exit the house. Seemingly, while trying to escape the burning of her home by the invading army, she was overtaken by the flames or smoke before she could reach safety.

INSCRIPTIONS AND EXTRA BIBLICAL WRITINGS.

Inscriptions and ancient writings are a significant source of data regarding women in biblical times. A few examples are a lengthy version of the Exodus 15:21 "Song of Miriam" found in a Dead Sea Scroll fragment, episodes in the lives of biblical women from Josephus' writings, another Dead Sea Scroll fragment reflecting the Essenes' negative view of women, cuneiform tablets describing cultural practices (possible background for the "wife as sister" accounts in the lives of Abraham and Isaac), and an Akkadian tablet from the Ras Shamra texts (coming from ancient Ugarit in Syria) describing the removal of clothes as a symbol of giving up both power and position (possible background for Old Testament passages involving women and the removal of clothes; see Is. 47:1, 2; Ezek. 16:37; Hos. 2:3, 10).

Sexuality and Gynecology. Although woman's sexuality is often depicted in a suggestive manner in ancient art (as in Pompeiian art and in much of the finds at Ashkelon), examples do exist in which the nurturing aspect of woman's sexuality is displayed (as in many paintings, figurines, and sculptures of mothers nursing their infants). Artifacts also offer data related to a woman's sexuality, as is evidenced by the interpretation of certain ancient Egyptian, open-ended figure-vases as objects used in the practice of midwifery. While some tend to think of sexuality only in reference to visual art and artifacts, inscriptions and ancient writings present data in this realm also. In Ephesus, an inscription on an ancient sidewalk gives directions to a nearby brothel, leaving little to the imagination. Restrictive purity regulations associated with menstruation can be read not only in the biblical material (see Lev. 15:19, 20; Mark 5:25–34) but also in Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other ancient Jewish writings.

Women's Clothing and Cosmetics. Some inscriptions are found and translated, yet their meanings remain a mystery. An inscription dating around 1400–1200 B.C. was discovered in 1920 at Ugarit in Syria, and finally, in 1977, clarified by rabbinic writings from the fourth century A.D. The phrase in question—"the city of gold"—had not been seen in any other material from the Old Testament time period. Rabbinic literature has now revealed that the phrase refers to a golden, turreted crown that was worn as decoration by women. Such a crown has been identified in several pieces of ancient art in Syria.

Similar Cultures. Although the study of similar cultures does not fit within the strict definition of biblical archaeology, sometimes in the context of hunting for the meaning of an artifact or a situation, other cultures offer helpful information. This cross-cultural study can be illustrated by many examples from Bedouin culture. Bedouins continue to live in much the same way they lived centuries, even millennia, ago. Bedouin shepherdesses today carry the same kind of goat skin water container as is mentioned in Genesis 21:14 because the porous skin helps keep the water cool. Modern Bedouin girls wear nose rings like the one Eliezer placed on Rebecca's nose (Gen. 24:47). A more serious example of Bedouin culture explaining biblical material is the Bedouin dependence upon its own clan for vengeance. This provides vital background information about the response of Dinah's brothers to her rape by Shechem (Gen. 34).

An object that previously was thought to be a religious incense burner is another example of the use of similar cultural practices to assist in the interpretation of the use of an artifact. When W. F. Albright retranslated the inscription on the object, he discovered that its use had been secular, not religious. Then in a 1868 publication, he found a passage dealing with semi-nomadic women of Sudan, which not

only explained the way that type of “cosmetic” incense burner was still being used in the 1800s but also explained a passage regarding the use of ointments and perfumes in Esther 2:12 and in Psalm 45:8.

Biblical archaeology has contributed invaluable information to the study of Scripture and will certainly be of help in the future as excavations continue. Much that helps in understanding the women of the Bible has already been found. As more women archaeologists become involved in the excavations and writings about the interpretations of the artifacts, more emphasis will be given to data relating to women in biblical times.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Eleonore Stump

In the history of the Christian tradition, biblical commentators have mostly been men. Often these commentators have been interested in finding, as directly as possible, theological lessons in the biblical texts. Generally, that theological interest prompted a deep and sensitive interpretation of the texts, but sometimes insufficient attention has been given to the *details* of biblical stories. Stories that involve some human conflict or drama, well worth reflecting on, from time to time have been treated as if the human details were disposable wrapping on some far more interesting theological lesson. In particular, commentators on biblical stories involving women or children sometimes have seemed uninterested in the roles of the women and children in those stories. If we do not pay attention to all the details in the biblical stories, however, we may well miss important parts of what the Bible has to teach us in those passages.

This point is best illustrated with an example. We can see the importance of noticing the women and children in biblical stories by thinking about one of the most famous biblical stories—Abraham's offering up of Isaac. Many well-known commentators, including Origen, Augustine, Jerome, Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra, Luther, Calvin, and Kierkegaard, have made interesting and insightful interpretations of this story. Nonetheless, for all their excellence, none of the commentators has satisfactorily answered basic questions raised by the story. Why did God put Abraham to the test as He did? That is, why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son? What is praiseworthy about Abraham's willingness to kill his own child? Why should Abraham's consent to destroy his son make him the father of faith? Part of the reason commentators have difficulty answering these questions is that they do not pay sufficient attention in the stories about Abraham to the roles of the women and children (except for Isaac, of course).

Perhaps some think of Abraham as married to one woman, Sarah, and having one son, Isaac. But, in fact, the Bible names for Abraham three women as wives or concubines and eight sons (see chart, The Family Tree of Abraham). The stories about these other wives and children are all useful for understanding the offering of Isaac, but the focus of this article is on just one other story, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael.

When it looked as if Sarah might never have children, Sarah gave her maid Hagar to Abraham to be his concubine, and in the course of time Hagar gave birth to a son, Ishmael. Then when Sarah was ninety years old, she did give birth to Isaac. Ishmael was fourteen years old at the time of Isaac's birth, and suddenly he had a brother. When Isaac was weaned—no doubt when he was between two and four years old—Abraham made a great feast. Ishmael was probably around sixteen or seventeen years old at the time. During the feast Ishmael mocked Isaac or gave him some other sort of trouble, and Sarah caught him doing so. Sarah had been jealous and violent toward Hagar in the past. At this point she blew up. She demanded that Abraham expel not only Ishmael but also Hagar, and she wanted them thrown out into the desert, where they were likely either to die of thirst or to be captured and sold for slaves.

What Sarah wanted was terrible. Ishmael had been Abraham's only child for more than fourteen years, and Hagar had been part of this complicated family for even longer. Throwing them out was a terrible betrayal of the love and trust that must have existed between Abraham and his teenaged boy and between Abraham and Hagar. Both Abraham and Sarah must have known that what Sarah demanded would likely prove to be the death of Hagar and Ishmael.

That Abraham was willing even to consider doing what Sarah wanted shows how ferocious her wrath must have been. But even so, Abraham could not bring himself to agree to her demands. At this point, God intervened in the struggle between Abraham and Sarah—very surprisingly by siding with murderously angry Sarah. Although Sarah's intentions were bad, the result she wanted, that only Isaac should count as Abraham's heir, was the result God had foreordained all along. So God sided with Sarah,

but He went contrary to Sarah's bad intentions because He again promised to make Ishmael a great nation. So what Sarah saw as a way of ruining Ishmael and getting rid of him, God promised to turn into a way of making Ishmael something glorious.

God's promise, then, relieved Abraham of the burden of betraying the trust between him and his son and between him and his concubine. Abraham could send them out into the desert without thinking that he was furthering Sarah's plan to destroy them. He could also explain God's promise to Hagar and Ishmael. He could make clear to them that by giving in to Sarah, he was not acting in a way to bring about their deaths or even their ruin because God was guaranteeing His protection of and blessing upon their lives.

God's promise let Abraham give in to Sarah without being guilty of a moral wrong. Abraham *trusted* God's promise to make of Ishmael a great nation. If Abraham had not believed God's promise when the lives of Ishmael and Hagar were at stake, then Abraham would have been guilty of betraying their trust and harming them. As a result of God's promise, Abraham stopped struggling within himself over whether to do what Sarah wanted, and he assented to her demands. He rose up early in the morning and sent Hagar and Ishmael out into the desert with only a loaf of bread and a bottle of water. That would be a terrible way to treat your son and his mother—unless you believed God's promise to make them into something glorious in the desert.

On the other hand, contrast Abraham's reaction to this promise of God with other occasions on which Abraham talked to God. When God promised Abraham a biological offspring, Abraham asked for a sign to confirm the truth of the promise. On that occasion, when the issue was abandoning Hagar and Ishmael in the desert, Abraham did not ask for any sign to reassure him of their safety. When what was at stake was the lives of total strangers in Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham bargained with God. Where the lives of his son and concubine were at risk, Abraham did not bargain in any of the ways he might have done. He did not ask God whether he might accompany Hagar and Ishmael to some oasis or whether he might send a convoy of servants to set up Hagar and Ishmael to be self-supporting by giving them herds and flocks. He just sent Ishmael and Hagar to walk off into the desert with less than a full day's provision of food and water. Even given the reassurance of God's promise, there was something distressing about the readiness with which Abraham acquiesced to Sarah's demands that he throw out his concubine and his son.

The next and last recorded episode during which God came to talk to Abraham was the offering of Isaac. The age of Isaac is not clear at this point, but he was old enough to carry a substantial load of wood up a mountain, while still being young enough to be quite diffident toward his father. To suppose that he was teenaged, maybe sixteen or seventeen, around the age of Ishmael at the time when Abraham abandoned Ishmael and Hagar in the desert, is not unreasonable.

At the outset of God's message to Abraham on this occasion was an elaborate identification of Isaac, "your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love" (Gen. 22:2). The phrase "your only son" is striking. If you had abandoned one of your two boys in the desert, would you be able to hear that phrase "your only son" without wincing and immediately thinking of Ishmael? And if the person who guaranteed the safety of the son you abandoned then used the expression "your only son" to refer to Isaac, wouldn't you immediately think of the boy you had abandoned and wonder in what sense Isaac was an only son?

The content of God's message is enough to turn a father's heart to stone: Take your only son—that is, the only son you have left—and offer him up as a burnt offering. But think of the expulsion of Ishmael again. God had told Abraham to act in a way that seemed likely to bring about Ishmael's death, except for God's promise to make Ishmael a great nation. Because Abraham believed the promise about Ishmael, he could abandon Ishmael in the desert without fear of harm to his son, however reasonable it would otherwise seem to believe that Ishmael would die out in the desert with only a little food and water. Now God was requiring the sacrifice of Isaac. But Abraham also had a promise from God about Isaac: God had also promised to make Isaac a great nation.

If God is good and His promises are trustworthy, then Isaac would have children who would count as Abraham's descendants, inherit the land of Canaan, and increase greatly in number. But when God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac was still a boy without children of his own. If Isaac died, God's promises about him would not have been true. Put another way, if God's promises are trustworthy, then Isaac would not die in his youth, however reasonable it seemed to think that he would.

In the case of Ishmael, family life was made much easier for Abraham if he believed that God's promises are true; trusting God's promises gave him a good reason to give in to his furious wife Sarah. Now things

were different. Doing what looked certain to bring about the death of Isaac was as strongly opposed to Abraham's self-interest as it could be. But if Abraham had not trusted God's promise about Isaac, what will we think, looking back on Abraham's behavior toward Ishmael? Won't we think that his apparent trust in God's promises then was just an excuse, a rationalization, for taking the easy way out where Sarah was concerned? If he refused to entrust Isaac to God's promises, although he was willing to abandon Ishmael on the strength of God's promise, won't we think that, after all, there was something terrible about his willingness to expel Ishmael?

In asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God was, in effect, asking Abraham what he would have done on that earlier occasion if it had been Isaac instead of Ishmael. Abraham had to trust God's promises and acknowledge His goodness, or he had to make clear that in the expulsion of Ishmael he was just using God's promise as a convenient excuse for doing a wrong action. This trial, then, would refine Abraham. Whichever way he acted, this time he would have to act out of unmixed motives. Abraham's options were to refuse to do what looked likely to bring about the death of Isaac—because he did not after all trust in God's promises—or to be willing to sacrifice Isaac, believing that in doing so he would not bring about Isaac's death—because he believed in God's promise to make of Isaac a great nation.

Abraham passed the test. He treated Isaac as he treated Ishmael. In this case, too, he rose up early in the morning and obeyed God's command. Treating the two cases in the same way required believing that even if he sacrificed Isaac, Isaac would live and flourish and be the source of a great nation. Is there anything too hard for God? So Abraham passed the test just by virtue of believing that in sacrificing Isaac he would not be bringing Isaac's life to an end because God is good, and His promises are trustworthy.

In this way of seeing the story, Abraham's line to the servants is not a polite fib. "Stay here with the donkey," he told them; "the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you" (Gen. 22:5). Similarly, when he told Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8), he was not engaging in tender deception or unconsciously cruel irony, as he would be doing if he thought he were going off to kill Isaac. Here, too, Abraham believed what he said.

Nonetheless, although he believed, Abraham might still have been in anguish as he said these lines. Think about a man who discovers, while mountain climbing with his son, that the only way to safety lies across a large crevice. If he did not believe his son could make it, he would not ask him to leap. But the father may be bathed in sweat, with years taken off his life, by the time the boy makes it over. The test God set for Abraham was a hard and painful one. But Abraham's ready acquiescence to Sarah's demand to abandon Hagar and Ishmael in the desert made this test a good and right one for Abraham.

What Hebrews 11 says about Abraham presupposes this way of reading the story, too. Abraham acted on faith in offering up Isaac because he believed that the offering of Isaac did not invalidate the promises of God, since God could even raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17–19).

God's verdict on Abraham is that Abraham had passed the test. As he raised the knife over Isaac, God told Abraham, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen. 22:12). What God said is just right. If Abraham had refused to trust Isaac to God after having been willing to expel Ishmael on God's promise, he would have been mocking rather than fearing God, acting as if God did not matter or did not mind much about the death of innocent children. But until Abraham had to choose whether or not to trust Isaac to God, perhaps no one could have known whether Abraham feared God because Abraham's motives in the case of Ishmael were confused and mixed together. God knew: The trial over Isaac refined Abraham's character. Because Abraham believed in God's goodness and the trustworthiness of God's promises, Abraham was willing to trust his son, his only son, to God. That is why Abraham is the father of faith.

If we remember Hagar and Ishmael when we read the story of the offering of Isaac, we can answer the questions that often arise in connection with that story. The expulsion of Ishmael makes it clear why God should try Abraham and why the test should take the form it did. What is at issue in the test was whether Abraham would believe in God's goodness in Isaac's case as well as in Ishmael's. What is praiseworthy about Abraham, what makes him the father of faith, is not his readiness to kill his child to please God. It is his willingness to trust in God's goodness and to believe God's promises, even when apparently those promises would surely turn out to be false. What makes Abraham the father of faith, then, is not just that he believed in God's existence or that he was obedient to God. He did believe in God's existence, and

he was obedient. What makes him the father of faith, however, was his belief that God is good and thus would never break His promises to His people.

If we focus only on Abraham (or Abraham and Isaac), as many interpreters do, and if we are not willing to pay serious and careful attention to the various women and children in the narrative, we will miss all this side of the story about the offering of Isaac. As a result, we could have a much harder time understanding why God would have asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, and it would be more difficult to grasp the sort of faith the Bible is recommending to us here. The same point applies to many other passages in the Bible as well. If we think carefully about the women and the children in those stories, we will see a side of the story, important for our understanding of the Bible's message, which we would have missed otherwise.

See also Gen. 21:1–21; 22:1–19; Heb. 11:17–19; notes on Children (2 Sam. 21; Ps. 128; Prov. 22; Luke 15); Obedience (Philem.); Patriarchy (Gen. 28); Promises of God (2 Pet. 1)