

Women of the Bible
The Shunammite Woman



"Faithful Service Rewarded"
II Kings 4:1-37

This woman of Shunam is called great even before we hear any other details of her story. We don't even know her name --- only "she was great".

She invited Elisha, the prophet of God, to eat at her house whenever he was in their town. Later she asked her husband to set up a room for him on their wall.

Whenever Elisha asked what she would have in return, she told him she had all she needed. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, told him she was a wealthy woman, but she had no child to leave it when she was gone. Elisha told the woman she would have a son, and he even told her when she would have the baby. She felt this was impossible because her husband was old.

Imagine her surprise when she conceived and had her son exactly as Elisha had said.

And imagine her shock and sorrow when, just a few short years later, her son suddenly died.

We often find it hard to believe a loved one is really gone. But this woman had such faith in Elisha and his God to think this truly couldn't be happening. She laid her own son on Elisha's bed, perhaps thinking this would make him well. When he still didn't wake, she asked her husband to let her go find Elisha. He must have thought she had taken leave of her senses. When he asked "why?", she only said all would be well.

When she found Elisha, she told him what had happened and asked him "why?". She had not asked for a son, so why would he be taken from her so soon?

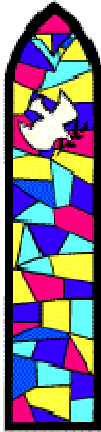
Elisha sent Gehazi to help the boy by laying Elisha's rod on his body. But this was not enough for this mother. God had given her a son by Elisha's word, so Elisha must be the one to come. She wouldn't leave without him.

When they came to the house, indeed the child was dead. Elisha lay upon the child with mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands. The boy's flesh grew warm. Elisha repeated the process. The boy sneezed. From the outer room his mother heard it! Then more sneezes, 7 in all. Her heart leaped within her! Surely her son lived! Finally Elisha called her into the room and she found he truly was alive! She fell at Elisha's feet and bowed. By God's mercy her son had been spared.

Many miracles are recorded in the Bible, and many are still happening today. Isn't it wonderful? Our God is in the miracle business!!!

Janet Bagwell

Women Of the Bible Tamar



**II Samuel 13:1-22/I Chronicles 3:9/
see also Leviticus 18:9-11/20:17/
Deuteronomy 22:25-26/ Deuteronomy 27:22**

Not all of the stories about women in the Bible are pleasant ones. I would encourage you to read the scriptures listed above so you can fully understand Tamar's story as well as what God thinks about the crimes committed.

Tamar was the daughter of King David and Maacah. Her brother was Absalom. Because of her father's other 7 wives and numerous concubines, she also had many half brothers and sisters. The Bible says she was young, pretty and a virgin. She was a princess and grew up in the palace. She had everything she needed. However, none of these things could protect her from a violent attack.

Tamar's oldest half brother, Amnon, lusted after her. He devised a plan that would put Tamar alone with him in his house. There he overpowered her and, ignoring all her pleas and begging for him to stop, he raped her. After the rape, he was filled with hatred for her and had her thrown out into the street.

Tamar, like all rape and incest victims, was not just physically violated. She was also emotionally and spiritually damaged. Her grief and shame were overwhelming. She tore her robes and put ashes on her head to show her agony. Then she ran down the street sobbing.

Many victims of rape, especially incestuous rape, are afraid or too ashamed to tell anyone. Even though it wasn't their fault, they carry a false sense of guilt.

Tamar, however, told her brother Absalom, when he found her in the street. His "advice" to her was: "He's your brother, don't be so upset, just forget about it."

Then he let her move into his house, and that is where she remained, desolate. (Secretly Absalom hated his brother, Amnon, from that day on, and later had him murdered.)

Next her father, King David, was told. Although David was extremely angry, unbelievably, he didn't punish Amnon or try to comfort his daughter. I don't understand why David didn't evoke punishment for his son's crime. Was it because Amnon was his oldest son and in line for the throne? David was the king and it was his job to see that both man's law and God's law were enforced. God hates both incest and rape. In fact, rape was punishable by death. (Deut.22:25-26)

We don't know anymore about Tamar. I wonder if her mother or some of the other women in her life were able to console her. Did she find a compassionate friend to talk to?

Concealing a crime instead of pursuing justice is wrong. Rape is ugly and vicious. I hope none of us would respond the way Tamar's brother and father did. Victims of rape and incest can't just forget about it. They need to talk to someone they can trust so they can heal. They need to know that God hates what happened to them.

We, as Christian women, need to provide love, support, and compassion to those we may encounter that have been victims of rape or sexual abuse. We need to be good listeners and let them know they are not at fault. Assure them that they have a Savior who loves them. He can provide both complete healing and peace. Let them know that they can feel free and whole again.

Maybe you have been reading this and you have been a victim of rape or some form of sexual abuse. If you have never talked to anyone about it, I would like to encourage you to find a competent counselor, your pastor, or a trusted friend. Talking about it is not easy, but it will help release the pain and begin the healing

process. Complete healing will take time, but you can have peace in both mind and soul.

Dianna Davis

Women Of the Bible



A Virtuous Woman (Proverbs 31:10-31)

This issue's column is going to be a little different. Instead of one woman in particular, I feel the need to write about Solomon's description of the ideal woman - the virtuous woman. In today's world it seems we find this kind of woman less and less frequently, which is terribly sad. I hope as you read this you recognize yourself in this description. If you don't, then I hope you will use this as a call from God to be the woman He intended for you to be...

Solomon asks the question "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." In today's world, too many people value the material things far above the virtuous, you can certainly tell that just by looking around you or by turning on the television- very little virtue there! Are we letting the world change our view, little by little, of what is acceptable? I hope not!

Solomon tells of a woman whose husband completely trusts her. (What a novel concept by today's standards.) A woman who does good for her family, who cares for her family. The woman spoken of in Proverbs puts her family's needs before her own. She saw to it that they were clothed, fed, provided for, but most importantly, loved. The love she had for them was obvious. She did everything she could to make sure they felt her love. A lot of the problem with the youth of today is that they don't feel loved. And why would they, when there is no one around to show love to them. How can they grow up and know how to love others when they've never truly been shown how. Some children come home from school each day and no one asks "How was your day?" Or even "Tell me what you learned today!" No one looks at their school papers or checks their homework. These children get the feeling that they really are not important to anyone at all. These children are the future, and they are important to God.

Solomon says "strength and honor are her clothing...she opens her mouth with wisdom...her tongue is the law of kindness." Oh what wonderful traits to have; to be strong, honorable, wise and kind! Can our children say that about us? I for one, certainly want God's wisdom in caring for my family and raising my children. And I want to do it with kindness. Harsh words, spoken in haste can never be taken back, and they cut into a person's heart far more deeply than any physical attack ever could. These are the scars that last forever.

"Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." People may look upon you and say you are successful or a good person, but the true test of a person's character comes from this very statement. These are the people who are with you most, who know you best. This is the true test of a virtuous woman. Is God first in your life? If so, then your family will be well cared for, for He will help you. And do you love your family more than yourself? Are you raising children that feel your love? Are you making sure they know how much God loves them? Show love to a child - even those who are not your own. You may be the only one who does!

"Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a virtuous woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Pam Yoak

Women Of the Bible



Lot's Wife (Genesis 13 & 19, Luke 17:32)

In Luke, Jesus tells us to remember Lot's wife after studying her story, I believe the lessons we can learn from her mistakes are very important. Although we are never told her name, we know a lot about her character.

She and her husband, Lot, were traveling with his Uncle Abraham and his wife Sarah. Both families were very wealthy with many herds and servants. They all believed in God; however, they placed Him in different priority lists. After a while, tensions between the two families mounted and Abraham told Lot they needed to go their separate ways. Lot, the head of his household, looked at the surrounding land and chose the best he could see. (They didn't seek God's will; they did what they wanted to do) Abraham didn't argue. Lot took his family and settled in the city Sodom.

Lot and his wife placed a high value on wealth and material things. The city of Sodom was very sinful and wicked. In order to live there they had to compromise their moral and spiritual values.

Lot's wife fell in love with the city and her way of life there. Her family was prosperous and the fact that God's laws were being ignored didn't seem to bother her. Lot wasn't as comfortable living there as his wife, but he was weak in character and stayed.

Lot and his wife had children. The Bible says they had daughters. She was raising her children in the midst of this wicked place. What kind of example were they to thee girls? They had put God so far down on their priority list that their children didn't believe their father when he told them about God's judgment. This is proven when Lot told his married daughters and their husbands about the impending doom, they laughed at

him. (They died in the city.)

The children learned how to compromise with the ungodly world they were living in. (Much like today's society; everybody's doing it, so it's not bad.) Her children's heritage was a distorted sense of moral values. (Read Genesis 19:33-38)

When she was told of God's coming judgment on the city she believed it, but she had a divided heart. When 2 angels came to warn them to get out of Sodom, the men in the city ordered Lot to give the 2 men to them. (They wanted to rape them) What did Lot's wife think when her husband offered the evil men of the city her 2 virgin daughters to do with as they wished? How could she stay there?

When it was time to flee the city, the angels had to take them by the hand and pull them away. They were told not to look back. However, instead of thanking God for his mercy and grace, Lot's wife looked back, both visually and with her heart. She directly disobeyed God, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

I'm glad that the Lord said to remember Lot's wife. When we see what the priorities were in her life, it's a wake-up call to us all. How we live our lives affects our children and those around us. They watch what we do and listen to what we say. If we put God low on our priority list and are willing to compromise God's law they see that.

Are possessions, wealth and a good economy more important to us than God's will for our lives? What do you believe and teach your children about the sinful and immoral things in our society? (Abortion, homosexuality, infidelity in marriage, pre-marital sex?) You are being watched by someone. Can they see Jesus in you? Or do they see someone who will compromise with society for material gain? Remember - the God who destroyed Sodom is still God today - He hasn't changed!

Dianna Davis