

HOME STUDY



Summer Quarter
June | July | August 2024

Home Study

SUMMER QUARTER

June, July, August 2024

Editorial	2
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God's Work Through Women and Youths

UNIT I: Women of Faith

June	2—The Creation of Women—Gen. 2:18-25	4
June	9—Deborah Encourages Barak—Judg. 4:4-10, 12-16	9
June	16—Ruth Follows Naomi—Ruth 1:1-9, 14b, 16	14
June	23—Ruth Meets Boaz—Ruth 2:8-18	19
June	30—Ruth Marries Boaz—Ruth 4:1-10	24
July	7—Hannah Commits Her Son to God—I Sam. 1:20, 26-28; 2:1-10	29
July	14—Esther's Bold Faith—Esth. 3:2-3, 5-6a; 4:7-16	34
July	21—The Deliverance of the Jews—Esth. 8:3-8; 9:18-23	39
July	28—A Sinner Serves Christ—Luke 7:36-50	43
Aug.	4—A Faithful Servant in the Church—Acts 9:36-43	47

UNIT II: Young People of Faith

Aug.	11—Young David Anointed King—I Sam. 16:1-4b, 6-13	51
Aug.	18—A Servant Girl Points Naaman to God—II Kgs. 5:1-5, 9-15a	55
Aug.	25—Josiah Calls the People Back to God—II Kgs. 22:8-10; 23:1-3, 21-23	59
	Paragraphs on Places and People	63
	For Comfort and Challenge	64



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GOD'S UNDERDOGS

BRIAN BURKE

"Do you believe in miracles?" These were the words of ABC broadcaster Al Michaels as time expired in the final period of the 1980 Winter Olympics semifinals. The underdog U.S. amateur hockey team had just beaten the defending champion "professional" Soviet national team—which had won four prior Olympic gold medals. The event, to this day, is referred to as "The Miracle on Ice." It is one of the greatest sports moments of the 20th century.

An underdog is defined as "a loser or predicted loser in a struggle or contest," or "a victim of injustice or persecution" (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary). The underdogs in our lessons this quarter, using worldly standards of measurement, are the ones chosen last, little noticed, and of little social status having no expectations of them from others or of themselves.

They are comprised of women of faith and young people of faith. They run the gamut from the only female judge of Israel (Judg. 4:4) to our most endearing figure, both female *and* young, an unnamed "little maid" who points a powerful, yet leprous, head of the armies of Syria to the source of healing: the prophet of the God of Israel. Or a shepherd boy, youngest of a clan of eight, interviewed last for a soon-to-be-vacant position (I Sam. 16:11).

The world's misconceptions about the dignity of women in Christian theology and practice and, more specifically, as

presented in the Bible, are challenged once we look at the role that women played in Scripture throughout both Testaments. Consider Mary Magdalene, who was the first person to whom Jesus appeared. She testified, along with other women (Luke 24:10), of Jesus' resurrection at a time when in Roman law, "women were ineligible as witnesses in court" (Couch, "Woman in Early Roman Law," *Harvard Law Review*, 43). Jesus' teaching about women and their constant presence with Him during His ministry highlighted the value of women like no other movement in history before the modern age.

Our lessons begin "in the beginning" on the sixth day with the creation of the first woman. We will see her glory as the only created being suitable as a companion for the first man (Gen. 2:18). Drawn from Adam's rib, she is like him but also dependent on him, as is Adam—and Eve—on the Lord God.

And Deborah, already mentioned, cognizant of this order of creation with wry wit pokes fun at Barak when he requests her presence in the battle against Jabin's army: "I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judg. 4:9). But when it's time for battle Deborah, in an act of nobility, encourages Barak by telling him "the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand" (vs. 14), not the hand of a woman.

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of LifeStone Ministries, Union Gospel Press Division. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and yieldedness to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Three lessons are devoted to the book of Ruth, partly because it contains multiple interesting elements, not least being the noble character of Ruth herself (1:16). Ruth contains a good wedding story, an origins story—of David and his greater Son Jesus—and theological foreshadowing (typology) of the work of Christ as our brother-redeemer. Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law Naomi would draw her back to Naomi's homeland (Israel), where she would meet a kinsman redeemer and eventual husband, Boaz.

Esther, like Ruth, is a woman in a foreign land. With Esther it's not by choice. She is a captive in Susa, the Persian capital at the time when the Babylonians had been defeated by the Persians, and in God's providence Esther was made queen. Her station in life was above Ruth's, yet both women played a key role in the fulfillment of the promises to Israel and its ultimate preservation.

In between Ruth (lessons 3-5) and Esther (lesson 7-8), we learn about Hannah, who is unable to conceive in a time and culture where barrenness was seen as failure. Hannah's promise to give her child to God if God would answer her prayer indicated how much she valued a child. Her child would become the prophet and anointer of God's chosen king for Israel (lesson 11, [1 Sam. 16:13]).

In lesson 12, there are "supporting actors" who shine, along with one obscure unnamed Jewish girl who plays the leading role. Naaman's servants mildly rebuke him when Naaman objects to the Prophet Elisha's healing instructions, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times" (II Kings 5:10), thinking the Jordan River too paltry for a man of his stature. But "in a further demonstration that humble servants seem to have greater insights than their prideful masters, Naaman's servants offer advice" (lesson 12, Carter Corbrey). Our "little maid" (5:2), a young Jewish girl in Syrian captivity, provided a source of healing for Naaman, the leprous captain



of the king of Syria's army, but his own servants confronted his pride lest he walk away unhealed (vs. 13).

We finish up our final weeks with two young kings, including Josiah, who was eight years old when he took the throne. David was predicted to place last in the "win the throne of Israel contest" (partly because of his youth [1 Sam. 16:11]). The healthy young shepherd boy did gain favor in God's eyes to be king, because he was what God was looking for: "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). David, as the first good king over the unified kingdom, and Josiah, the reforming king in Judah during the divided kingdom, were both great figures in Israel's history. Both were in the promised kingly line of Judah that would lead to Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5) and one who would eternally occupy David's throne (Acts 2:30).

The apostle Paul was accustomed to fighting for the underdog, perhaps most evident in his intervention for Onesimus with his slave master Philemon. Paul, in a sense, proclaimed an underdog theology of the church: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty . . . That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-27, 29).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

GEN. 2:18 And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and

he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, *This is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

NOTES

The Creation of Woman

Lesson Text: Genesis 2:18-25

Related Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-31; 3:9-21; 5:1-2; I Timothy 2:12-15

TIME: unknown

PLACE: Garden of Eden

GOLDEN TEXT—“The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

Lesson Exposition

Genesis 1 records the creation of all the universe in six days. On the sixth day, God created man and woman (vs. 27). Genesis 2 then gives us a more detailed account of the creation of mankind.

Genesis 2:7 tells us that God “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” This establishes that man is the immediate creation of God, not the result of millions of years of gradual development from some prior species of creature. Man is unique and uniquely related to God, for he has been created in God’s image (1:27).

Man was the pinnacle of God’s creation. The earth, the seas, the plants, and the animals—all had been created in preparation for the creation of man. But creation still was not complete when the one called Adam, meaning “man,” was brought into existence.

THE NEED OF MAN—Gen. 2:18-20

Observed by God (Gen. 2:18). God placed Adam in a beautiful garden “to dress it and to keep it” (vs. 15). It was

a perfect environment, but it was still incomplete. Throughout the Creation account in Genesis 1, it is repeated that “God saw that it was good” (vss. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25; cf. vss. 4, 31).

Now, for the first time, God declared that something was not good: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (2:18). It was not in God’s plan for the man to be alone, so He declared that He would “make him an help meet for him”—that is, a helper who would correspond to him and support him.

God knows our needs before we ever become aware of them. It is comforting to know that He knows us better than we know ourselves and is at work to supply all we need. When we become aware of a need in our lives and turn to Him, we are not turning to one who is unprepared, unknowledgeable, and uncompassionate. We are turning to One who knows infinitely better than we do what we really need and who possesses the power and the will to provide it.

Observed by the man (Gen. 2:19-20). The Lord knew that Adam needed a helper and companion, and He would graciously supply one; but the newly created Adam did not yet un-