

GIRLS

like

US

A devotional about the different women of the Bible

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Day 1

KNOWN like Hagar

Scripture: Genesis 29-35 / Genesis 16

Hagar was an Egyptian slave who was purchased by Abraham. Since his wife, Sarah, could not conceive, she orders Hagar to sleep with Abraham. Ishmael was born and this caused a lifelong tension between the two. Sarah treated Hagar harshly and Hagar was disgusted with Sarah. Because of this, Hagar runs away. While Hagar was in the desert, God met her and spoke to her. In this meeting, Hagar becomes the first person in the Bible to have named God. She named God El' Roi, which means, the God who sees.

Hagar, who ended up in a situation that was not of her choice; ends up in the desert saying to herself, "No one cares, no one will take care of me. Everything I have come up with has run out". It is when an angel from the Lord meets her and asks her, "Where have you come from and where are you going?" In this encounter, she realizes that the Lord sees her and has not forgotten her. In her moments of loneliness, hopelessness, and pain, God came to Hagar and reminded her that she is known by Him. God remained faithful to her and Ishmael. He continued to provide and see them even when others did not.

Hagar is a girl who tried to make the best, with what life handed her. Yet even with her good intentions, life was still unkind. She was tired, frustrated, and angry. You may find yourself in the same situation today and feel forgotten and neglected by those whom we thought we could rely on. You can choose to run in rebellion or sit in despair. Her story tells us, of our God who sees us, even if we do not realize it. He hears your anxious thoughts and worries. He cares about you. He knows you deeply and constantly reaches out to you to remind you of your worth.

Have you seen the One who truly sees you? God is relentless in the pursuit of letting you know that you are known and seen just like Hagar.

Have you ever felt like the 'whole world was against you'? How did God show His presence then and how do you know that God is present with you now?

Day 2

ABIDE like Priscilla

Scripture: Acts 18-19; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

Priscilla is a woman who is said to be from a prominent Roman family and was married to Aquila. Throughout the new testament, the 6 times that they were mentioned, Priscilla was never mentioned without Aquilla. Though we do not know much about Priscilla, what we do know is enough. She is a woman who deeply abided in Christ. She was a woman of hospitality every time Paul visited (Acts 18). She was a hard-working woman in her tent-making business with Aquilla. Priscilla was also a woman of boldness as she went on mission trips to Syria with her husband and Paul. She was also well-versed in scripture and helped disciple Apollo with her husband, who then continued the mission of ministering and encouraging people. Lastly, in the book of Romans, Priscilla and Aquilla were known to have risked their lives to save Paul to which Paul and the entire church felt indebted to them.

Priscilla was a woman who never failed to show up whenever she was needed. In the multiple instances throughout Scriptures, we see her ministering, loving, discipling, and ever present whenever help was needed. She never failed to carry a heart of hospitality whenever Paul needed help and a place to stay. It was said that during that historical context, tentmakers were seen as people who worked common jobs and were approached with a slight disdain at times. And yet, the faithful partnership, she had with Aquilla continued to shed light on the obedience and kindness that Priscilla carried.

Not only did Priscilla walk in faithfulness to Christ, but she also exemplified a beautiful picture of what a true abiding partner looks like. Likewise, within this relationship, Aquila and Priscilla had a mutual abiding with one another that truly shows the beauty of entanglement and being for each other. Through the obedience and partnership of Priscilla to her best friend and partner, we see the character of abiding in full bloom as she remains steady with her love and devotion to her craft, her husband, and her love for Christ. Through Priscilla, we see an example of abiding to Christ, not only in one instance but in our everyday life.

Priscilla is a woman who leaned in and kept in step with God. Her moments shone in the

small steps of hospitality, showing up and studying scripture. She remained faithful in the works that were not seen by many but were seen by God who paid attention to every facet of response she made. To abide in Christ is to step into the abyss of the unknown and walk in confidence that God will carry us through. The work of abiding is not an overnight switch that we can turn on, but years of work and learning. Priscilla's abiding heart for Christ did not emerge one day but emerged through the years as she continued to choose Christ every day. To be a girl like Priscilla is to actively make the choice every day and every moment that Christ is worth it, and that Christ is the one whom we should continue to fall in love with every day.

So, to the girls who are like Priscilla don't get tired of showing up even if it feels that you are sometimes alone: God will see such works and continue to be faithful with you in every crevice of your life.

How do you keep in step with God? What does 'abiding' look like in your everyday life?

DAY 3

NOBLE like Ruth

Scripture: Ruth 1-4

The story of Ruth begins when Naomi's two sons died leaving her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to be widows. Out of love, Naomi urges her two daughters-in-law to go back home and find a new life as they are still young. Despite her firm decision to head back to her hometown in Bethlehem, Ruth's love and loyalty towards Naomi was deeper than Naomi would've realized. Ruth decides to follow Naomi and even goes so far as to declare the following "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth didn't have to follow Naomi and she certainly did not have to step into the unknown of moving to a new land, especially after being widowed. And yet, with boldness, Ruth remained faithful despite the looming uncertainties. In her story, we don't really hear a voice from God. Rather, what we see are the small ties and connections that weave a story of God's faithfulness even when it feels that God is silent. As Ruth remained steadfast in her commitment and obedient to her mother-in-law, she then had the opportunity to meet a man named Boaz who honored and loved her and, in the end, the two were married. Through Ruth and Boaz, David's lineage continues until Jesus. Ruth had no idea, but God is actually fulfilling His promise and plan for Israel through her.

The story of Ruth shows us how small steps of faith are evidenced by a noble heart and strength of character. Ruth's strength and fortitude did not emerge overnight but were rather the fruit of continuous faith and boldness to step into the hard things in life. Ruth continued to believe what was right and true, and in those beliefs, she pushed forward and held her head high believing that the God whom she may not see or hear has her back. Like Ruth, we can and must hold our head high as we walk in the hardness and confusing parts of our life. We must not let the world sway us from the truth and from what is of God. Like Ruth, we can take the higher road not just out of duty, but out of deep love and conviction in doing what is righteous and true. Ruth was

able to do anything that was put in her path because of the love that she carried. She never let go of her love and respect for Naomi, which resulted in her resilience and noble character.

So even when we feel alone in our fight or are struggling to see the end, know that God is working in and through every detail of your life and He uses it to bring His purposes for you, the people around you and even for an entire nation just as He did with Ruth.

Share an experience where you had to choose to boldly follow God, even if the road seemed 'unclear'. How did God reward your boldness to follow Him?

DAY 4

LIGHT like The Woman of Samaria

Scripture: John 4:1-42

The Samaritan woman remains nameless from start to end. Perhaps John thought that labels like, "woman" and "Samaritan" were more apt to use for the message of this story. The passage tells us she has been married five times and the man she was currently living with was not her husband. This lifestyle was not well accepted by society. She goes to the well at the hottest hour of the day while no one else is there. Jesus who chooses to take the road every other Jew intentionally avoids, meets and speaks with her. He brings the message of the good news to the woman that will change her and her town forever.

The Samaritan woman's story is filled with grace and hope. She was in need of acceptance and forgiveness, but two things disqualify her: Her origin (who she is) and her life choices (what she's done). Since she was a Samaritan, she was an outcast to the Jews. But also, since she was living an immoral life, she was an outcast in her own town.

The Light that exposed her sin is the same Light that set her free. The Samaritan woman is like the girl who feels like she can never be accepted because of who she is. She is also the girl who feels like she can never be forgiven because of all the bad things she has done. Jesus came for the very ones like her - for the ones like us. He says there are no more 'disqualifiers' that can keep anyone from being able to come to God.

After receiving the good news, she runs back to town in excitement, even leaving her jar. She couldn't wait to tell all the people that Hope has come. When you allow God to redeem your life, from the darkness of your sinful past, your life becomes light to those around you. God uses every mistake, every wrong decision, yes - those worst moments in your life to let others know that no sin is too deep, and no past is too dark where His light cannot shine through.

How has God redeemed you from your past? How do you now shine the same light to others?

DAY 5

PRAISE like Deborah

Scripture: Judges 4-5

We know Deborah as the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. Alongside that calling, she was also a wife and a prophetess. She stood her ground when the rest of Israel was, yet again, in another cycle of rebellion. She was faithful to God in fulfilling her roles and people respected her and looked to her for wisdom and guidance.

Deborah is leading a people whose hearts were far from God. Once again, the nation of Israel has forgotten Yahweh and gone their own way. God then directs Deborah to tell Barak to go into battle, but Barak hesitates to go if she doesn't go with him. It was not her role to go into battle but agrees to it anyway.

Deborah instructed Barak, directed the people, strategized with the army, and foretold the victory of the nation of Israel in this battle. Her handprints were all over this triumph that brought Israel forty years of peace. But instead of stealing any of the glory from God, she leads her people to a song of PRAISE for the battle that the Lord has won for them. This expression covers all of chapter 5 of Judges as Deborah and Barak extravagantly declare the work of God. It speaks volumes of Deborah's heart and devotion to God. God was glorified through her faithfulness, courage, and leadership. She praised because her people's hearts were once again turned back to the Lord.

Deborah is inspirational because of her courage and wisdom. We look up to her as someone who achieved great things for God. But the lasting impact she made in her time was not in the battle she won against the Canaanites but the hearts she won back to the Lord. She was careful to point the people back to God through her praise. When people would likely lift her, she made it a point to lift God's name. We are called to do exemplary works just like Deborah. It may be in different fields and circumstances using our unique giftings but all for the glory of the same Name. When we give God glory, He uses it to draw people's hearts back to Him.

Cite a couple of achievements you've had this year. How does God play a role in your achievements?

DAY 6

BRAVE like Esther

Scripture: Esther 1-10

Esther is a Jewish orphan girl who was taken in by her uncle, Mordecai, and would later rise up to be the queen and the hero of her people. We see the hand of God move from the time she was chosen to be queen by King Xerxes. Though Esther was chosen because of her beauty and virtue, we know that the Lord is already setting up the stage for a mighty work that He will do for the people of Israel through her.

The conflict in the story begins when Haman, the king's official, got so angry with the Jews that he plotted to kill them all. Mordecai learned about this evil plan and was convinced that the Lord will save Israel from being wiped out because of the covenant God made with them. He then thinks of Esther who had the chance to be used by God for such a time as this. He implores her to go to the king and request to speak with him. Queens during this time were not allowed to go to the king unless the king called for her. Doing what Mordecai is asking her to do could cost her life.

Esther, who was hesitant at first, asks for Mordecai to fast with her and courageously decides to go and speak with the king. She puts her life in the hands of God and tells Mordecai that if she perishes, she perishes. Esther goes in to meet with the king. Because of his love for her and God's hand on her, she receives favor from the king as he holds out the golden scepter towards her. She invites the king to dinner where she reveals Haman's evil plot towards the Jews. Being a Jew herself, she pleads for her life and the life of her people. The king was furious as he learned about Haman's plan. Haman was hung on the gallows and the people of Israel were saved.

Her hesitation in the initial conversation with Mordecai tells us she was scared for her own life. She understood the danger she was faced with but also recognized that it was no accident that God put her there at this exact time and for a specific purpose. Being brave does not always mean feeling ready or bold. Being brave means trusting that God is actively involved and is continuously working in and through our lives to complete His grand plan. Being brave means

wholly submitting ourselves before God and saying, "Here's my life, Lord. Use it in whatever way you please."

You may not exactly be like Esther who lived a fairy tale story of being an orphan to a queen. But the details in how God worked in Esther's life is the same way he works in yours. He is engaged in every moment of your life. He uses your experience, situation, character, and influence to bring about His perfect plan. When God asks us to step out in faith, He knows we are ready.

Cite a time where you were required to be brave. What do you do when God asks you to "GO" and you feel like you're not ready?

DAY 7

DREAM like Rachel

Genesis 29-35

We know Rachel to be the daughter of Laban and the sister of Leah. Jacob meets her and determines to marry her. It didn't come easy as Jacob had hoped for. He had to work for her father for 7 years to marry Rachel. After Jacob served those 7 years, Laban tricks him by giving her older daughter, Leah, instead. Jacob needed to work another 7 years to get Rachel. Jacob's relentless pursuit for Rachel bore fruit and he was finally able to marry her. Thinking it was happily ever after, Rachel finds herself not able to bear children. Rachel could not conceive with Jacob, even though her sister Leah could. Once again, her dreams were not coming true as she had wished they would. Even if she was filled with exhaustion and heartaches, Rachel doesn't give up. After years of waiting, God gives Rachel his sons Joseph and Benjamin.

Though there is not an entire chapter or book written on the story of Rachel, what Scripture tells us about her is enough to know that she was a woman who had big dreams. She experienced defeat and frustration because of unfulfilled hopes and desires. Nevertheless, even in this imperfect story, God uses it to show us how He works. It tells us that God knows the dreams of our hearts. In fact, He puts them in us. Rachel expected for her plans to carry out a certain way. But God worked it out another way. He took what was her desire and caused it to come to pass in His time and His way for Rachel's good and for His glory.

Like Rachel, there are times when we feel that our dreams are always hindered and out of reach. It can even cause us to question God and ask why He wouldn't allow it to happen when they are good and noble desires. It can cause us bitterness when we look at others just like how Rachel saw Leah marrying Jacob first and bearing many children. How painful that must have been! The dream you have might be for a lifetime partner, having children, a successful career, a complete family, etc. Whatever it is, it's important that we realize that God is the giver and the fulfiller of our hearts' greatest desires.

Rachel's story teaches us how even in our own aspirations we need to submit to God. We should recognize that it is He who puts these good desires in us. Each of us carries a dream in our hearts - whether big or small. Our passage today teaches us that to dream is to bring all of our deepest desires and hopes to God and boldly come to the throne to ask for what makes our hearts alive. God does not silence dreams, but rather, perfects them. He is able to bring these aspirations to reality within His design for His glory and for your good and for the good of others.

Share a lifelong dream that you've had when you were a kid. How different is that dream now, and how did God 'redefine' that dream?

DAY 8

GRACE like Eve

Scripture: Genesis 1-4

Eve may not be the popular choice of women in the Bible whom we would want to learn from. And, she also gets a bad reputation for being responsible for setting the curse in motion by committing the first sin. Studying about her, however, can give us more insight into ourselves than we realize.

Eve is the first woman. God formed her from the rib of Adam to be his helper and tend to God's creation with him. God said, "It was good". The garden was beautiful. All of creation was perfect and humans walked with God. There was nothing else Eve could want... or was there? Right before Satan tempted Eve, the Bible introduces the serpent as "craftier" than any other animal. His spiel was intended to tease a desire that was present in Eve. Satan used this desire to let Eve question God's goodness and His Word. He deceived Eve into thinking that there was something she was missing out on and there was something better than what God has for them.

Eve fell for it and took a bite of the forbidden fruit. The glorious beginning quickly falls into a tragic event that would change the history of humankind for generations. Imagine what Eve felt in that very moment when she realized what she had done. She caused God to have deep sorrow, got her husband in trouble, and the fate of the entire human race was changed for the worst. But amid the chaos, God begins to unfold His plan.

That part of Eve that transgressed is in all of us. We try to look for other things in this world to fulfill our desires because we doubt that God truly and completely can. We fall over and over and when we fail, we find ourselves lost. We hurt ourselves, the people we love and God. Our mistakes may even change the course of our life for the worse. But in Christ, we are never without hope. Just like with Eve, Christ is able to redeem our life's most damaging mistakes and use it for our good and God's glory.

Was there a time wherein you've deliberately disobeyed God and you didn't receive the consequences that you deserved? How did God's grace look like in that instance?