



TWELVE
EXTRAORDINARY
WOMEN

HOW GOD SHAPED WOMEN *of the Bible*
and WHAT HE WANTS *to Do with You*

JOHN
MACARTHUR

Bestselling Author of *Twelve Ordinary Men* and *Hard to Believe*

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ALLUSIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT IN LUKE 1

Luke 1 (NKJV)	Old Testament (NKJV)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My soul magnifies the Lord” (46). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My heart rejoices in the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:1). • “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord” (Ps. 34:2). • “My soul shall be joyful in the Lord” (Ps. 35:9). • “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God” (Isa. 61:10).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (47). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “God is my salvation” (Isa. 12:2). • “There is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior” (Isa. 45:21).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant” (48). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant” (1 Sam. 1:11). • “He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer” (Ps. 102:17). • “Who remembered us in our lowly state, for His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 136:23).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (48). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Then Leah said, ‘I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed’” (Gen. 30:13). • “And all nations will call you blessed” (Mal. 3:12).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For He who is mighty has done great things for me” (49). • “And holy is His name” (49). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things” (Ps. 71:19). • “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad” (Ps. 126:3). • “No one is holy like the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:2). • “Holy and awesome is His name” (Ps. 111:9). • “The High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa. 57:15).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And His mercy is on them who fear Him from generation to generation” (50). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him” (Ps. 103:11). • “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children” (Ps. 103:17).

Luke 1 (NKJV)	Old Testament (NKJV)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation” (Isa. 51:8).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has shown strength with His arm” (51). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand” (Ps. 89:13). • “He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory” (Ps. 98:1). • “The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” (Isa. 52:10).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (51). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm” (Ps. 89:10). • “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly” (52). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory” (1 Sam. 2:6–8). • “He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, and sets others in their place” (Job 34:24).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty” (53). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness” (Ps. 107:9).

Luke 1 (NKJV)	Old Testament (NKJV)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever” (54–55). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He has remembered His mercy and His fulness to the house of Israel” (Ps. 98:3). • “O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!” (Isa. 44:21). • “You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old” (Mic. 7:20). • “O seed of Abraham . . . He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham” (Ps. 105:6–9).

STUDY GUIDE



CHAPTER 1—EVE

1. What distinguishes Eve from all other women? Why did God create her?
2. The way Eve was created speaks of Eve's fundamental equality with Adam. What does this mean to you? How do you understand the duty and role of women?
3. Read Matthew 19:4–6. What did Jesus say about the relationship between men and women and what does that mean today?
4. In what ways was Eve a peer to Adam? In what ways were they different? What does this say about the marriage relationship today?

5. In this chapter, John MacArthur says that the wife is “subordinate, yet equal” to the husband. What does this mean and how can this be a reality in your life?
6. Read Genesis 3:1–7. In what ways is your temptation similar to Eve’s temptation? What process does Satan use to tempt you?
7. How can your personal Bible study help you defend yourself against temptation?
8. The two most important relationships to a woman were the focus of the curse as a result of Eve’s sin. What were these relationships and how important are these relationships to you?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Eve’s life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 2—SARAH

1. What are your first thoughts about Sarai (or Sarah)?
2. We first discover Sarah when she was 65 years old. At that time she was beautiful but had no children. Why was it so important that a woman have children?
3. List Sarah’s strengths and weaknesses. Now list your strengths and weaknesses. In what ways are you and Sarah similar? In what ways are you different?
4. Because she was childless, Sarah is characterized as frustrated and

resentful. When you don't get what you expect, what words can be used to characterize the way you act? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Explain your response.

5. Sarah's actions reveal that she was totally devoted to her husband. Your life reveals the people and/or things to which you are totally devoted. What does your life say is important to you?
6. In spite of her years of childlessness, Sarah remained confident that God would do what He promised to do. Your life is characterized by hope. For what are you hoping? How confident are you that God will do what you expect?
7. Read Genesis 17:20–21. How do you think Sarah felt when she heard these words?
8. What was significant about Sarah's laughter in Genesis 18:15? How important is it that we be honest with God?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Sarah's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 3—RAHAB

1. As far as we know, Rahab was a willing participant in her sinful lifestyle. If judged by society's standards, she would have been an outcast. What are some reasons we cast people aside? Are we justified in doing so?
2. What about Rahab made her one God chose to spare?

3. Read Joshua 2:1–7. What role did Rahab play in the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land? Why was her involvement so important?
4. Rahab lied to cover for the spies. There was nothing right about her lying. Could God have accomplished His purposes through her telling the truth about the spies? Explain your response.
5. Lying was a way of life in Rahab's world. How important is it that we teach and learn God's principles?
6. Something inside Rahab made her respond to the spies favorably. What does the Holy Spirit prompt you to do that is out of character for you?
7. Read Joshua 2:8–14. What was the relationship between Rahab's fear and her faith? How would you describe this relationship in your life?
8. What is Rahab's legacy? What does this teach us about God's ability to use us even when we've lived in ways that were displeasing to Him?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Rahab's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 4—RUTH

1. Ruth's story begins with a description of her condition. How would you describe your present condition?

2. Read Ruth 1:6-14. How would you describe Ruth to someone who had never heard of her?
3. Ruth expressed her commitment to Naomi and to God. In doing so, she distanced herself from the gods of her past. From what “gods” of the past do you need to be separated?
4. Naomi’s faith obviously influenced Ruth. How does your faith affect other people? Do you encourage people toward God or away from Him? Explain.
5. Ruth returned to Bethlehem in order to help support Naomi. Do you have this kind of relationship with another female? Why or why not?
6. Why did Boaz feel compassion on Naomi and Ruth? Boaz is called the deliverer. Describe your first encounter with your “Deliverer.”
7. Boaz paid a price to redeem Ruth. How did this change Ruth’s perception of her value? What is your value to God based on the price He paid to redeem you?
8. When Boaz redeemed Ruth, the contract was irrevocable. How does this compare to your relationship with God? Why is it irrevocable?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Ruth’s life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 5—HANNAH

1. Read 1 Samuel 1:24–28. How has your life been affected by the

spiritual devotion of your parents? How will you affect future generations?

2. Like Sarah, Hannah was childless. What does her willingness to give her son to God's service say about her priorities? What does your daily life say about your priorities?
3. Hannah "understood that motherhood is the highest calling God can bestow on any woman." What is your reaction to that statement?
4. Hannah was used by God to provide a leader when Israel was in desperate need of godly guidance. How is God using you?
5. "The love between husband and wife is the real key to a thriving family.... The properly situated family has *marriage* at the center; families shouldn't revolve around the children." Why is this statement true? What adjustments do you need to make in your attitude toward marriage and children?
6. What did you learn from your parents about love, self-sacrifice, integrity, virtue, sin, sympathy, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness? What are you teaching others in these areas?
7. Hannah's prayer life demonstrated the depth of her love for God. What does your prayer life say about your love for God?
8. Hannah had a deep love for heaven, her husband, and her home. Because of this, God rewarded her with a fulfilling life. Is your life fulfilling? What is the connection between your fulfillment and your love for heaven, your home, and your husband?

9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Hannah's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 6—MARY

1. Mary is one of the most well-known women of the Bible and of history. What qualities do you most often associate with Mary's life?
2. Read Luke 1:28–35. In this passage, God's incredible plan for Mary is revealed. What is God's incredible plan for your life and how has it been revealed to you?
3. In accepting her role as a pregnant virgin, Mary accepted the fact that people would think badly of her. Are you more concerned about pleasing God or people? Explain your response.
4. Mary and Elizabeth were on the same page spiritually. With whom do you share a deep spiritual bond? How important is this relationship to your spiritual development?
5. Mary's natural response to God's activity in her life was a sincere attitude of worship. What is your natural response to God's work in your life? How important to you is an attitude of worship?
6. Mary yielded Jesus to God's purposes. It is vital that we yield those inside our sphere of influence to God's purposes. Who are those people you are yielding to God and what is God doing through their lives?
7. Ultimately, Mary had to watch her Son die on a Roman cross.

How do you think she felt as these events unfolded? Do you think she ever questioned God's purpose for Jesus? Why or why not?

8. Mary never claimed to be anything more than a humble servant of God. In what ways can you become a humble servant in your daily life? Which of your priorities might God change or eliminate?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Mary's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 7—ANNA

1. Read Luke 2:36–38. What is your initial impression of Anna?
2. Because Anna had hopes and dreams that were rooted in her understanding of Scripture, she was spiritually focused. In what are your hopes and dreams rooted? What is your primary focus?
3. Anna was a prophetess. What does that term mean? In what ways do you proclaim God's Word to others?
4. Luke 2:37 tells us that Anna did not depart from the temple. What does this say about the importance she placed on her relationship with God? How do you compare to her example?
5. Anna had been praying and fasting for a long time. How do you think she felt when she realized that Jesus was the Messiah?
6. We don't know what happened to Anna after the experience described in Luke 2. We can only imagine that she told everyone

she knew about God's revelation. What do you tell everyone you know? If their encounter with you is their only spiritual encounter, what are they learning?

7. Anna's spiritual life would be described as focused and consistent. How would you describe your spiritual life?
8. Anna left a legacy of devotion to God. What is the legacy of your life? What do you need to change so that your legacy will be similar to that of Anna?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of Anna's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 8—THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

1. What are some reasons Jesus had to avoid the Samaritan woman? Why did Jesus choose to engage her in conversation?
2. There were plenty of legitimate reasons for Jesus to avoid the Samaritan woman. In what ways has Jesus gone out of His way to affect your life?
3. Why did Jesus choose to reveal His identity as the Messiah at this time in this place? Why did Jesus choose to reveal Himself to you?
4. The Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus spoke to her. Whom might be surprised by your initiating a conversation regarding spiritual matters?
5. When Jesus told the woman to get her husband, He revealed that

His knowledge of her wasn't limited by her self-disclosure. What does this tell you about God's knowledge of the details of your life?

6. After her conversation with Jesus, the woman was dramatically transformed. In what ways has your life been changed by your relationship with Jesus?
7. The religious authorities rejected Jesus; the outcasts accepted Him. Describe your spiritual condition as either religion or a relationship. Which is easiest to maintain? Which is most beneficial to you?
8. The people of the town first believed because they saw the change in the woman. Later their faith was strengthened as they met Jesus. Is your faith based on your personal encounter with Jesus or on your encounter with people who know Him? What is the difference?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of the Samaritan woman's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 9—MARTHA AND MARY

1. Even though they had different ways to exhibit it, Martha and Mary both loved Jesus. How do you express your love for Jesus?
2. Read Luke 10:38–42. What is the point of this story? How could the conflict between Martha and Mary have been avoided?
3. Mary is identified as the true worshiper. What elements of Mary's worship are parts of your worship? In what ways does your worship differ from that of Mary?

4. Martha is identified as a devoted servant. How does your service to God compare to the service Martha demonstrated? Are you a real servant of Jesus or a fan of Jesus? Explain your response.
5. The conflict between Martha and Mary was a reflection of the conflict between the love for others and the love for self. Consider your daily life. Are you more interested in meeting your own needs or in meeting the needs of others? In what ways can you be more focused on the needs of others?
6. Why is there a priority of worship over service? How does authentic worship affect your attitude toward service?
7. Do you prefer doing things for Jesus or spending time knowing Jesus? Would your daily schedule back up your response? Why or why not?
8. Why is faith preferred over works? What are three things you can do to develop your faith and help it grow?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study of the lives of Martha and Mary? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 10—MARY MAGDALENE

1. Mary Magdalene had a dark past. Jesus had liberated her from demonic bondage. From what have you or from what do you need to be liberated? How would your life change because of your liberation?

2. What is the difference between being tormented with an affliction and choosing to live in sinful rebellion? In what ways are you rebellious toward God?
3. Luke and Mark celebrated Christ's goodness and grace toward Mary Magdalene. When was the last time you celebrated Christ's goodness and grace toward you? What keeps you from celebrating it more often?
4. Mary Magdalene's love for Jesus was a direct result of her authentic faith in Him. Would you be characterized in a similar way? Why or why not?
5. It is interesting that Mary Magdalene remained faithful to Jesus even after His disciples deserted Him. Her devotion to Christ was without compromise. In what ways are you tempted to compromise your faith? What can you do to prevent that from happening?
6. Mary Magdalene was the first to reach the tomb of Jesus. How was her faith rewarded?
7. Read John 20:16. How did Mary Magdalene recognize Jesus? If Jesus spoke to you, would you recognize His voice? Why or why not?
8. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Some might say that her faith was more intense because she had been forgiven so much. Do you love God in proportion to the forgiveness you've received? Why or why not?
9. What life principles did you learn from the study Mary Magdalene's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?

CHAPTER 11—LYDIA

1. Lydia was a businesswoman who devoted her life to God. Is your life devoted more to God or to your own pursuits? Explain your response.
2. Though Lydia was seeking God, she did not know God. Are you a seeker or a knower? Explain the point in time at which you were transformed.
3. Lydia is a classic example of the fact that good people who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior will spend eternity separated from God in a place called hell. Do you know any “good” people? What should be your attitude toward them?
4. Grace draws people to God. Explain how you were drawn to God. How might God use you to draw others to Himself?
5. When Lydia was transformed, it affected more than her. Who are those people within your circle of influence? What are you doing to influence them toward deeper relationships with God?
6. Lydia became known for her hospitality—a spiritual gift. Which spiritual gift is most evident in your life? For what purposes are you using your gift?
7. Lydia apparently became a key layperson in the church at Philippi. What is your role in your church? How might God be able to use you through your church?
8. What began in Philippi affected the entire world. What might God

be starting in your heart and life that will affect people for generations to come in places you've never seen?

9. What life principles did you learn from the study Lydia's life? How will you apply these principles to your life?