

7-Day Reading Plan
WOMEN IN THE BIBLE
from the



NIV
**KINGDOM
GIRLS
BIBLE**



WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

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DAY ONE: Esther

Read: ESTHER 2:1-18; 2:5-4:16; 7:1-7

Esther lives in Persia, where the Jews have been taken captive out of Israel. Both of Esther's parents have died. She lived with her Uncle Mordecai, a good man. Esther's beauty attracted officials who were looking for a new queen for King Xerxes. His former queen Vashti disobeyed him and has been sent away. When the king's men discovered innocent Esther, she begged them to leave her alone. She didn't want to go away from her home and her uncle. But she had no choice.

The men take Esther to the palace where many women are gathered as possible replacements for Vashti. They are treated royally, with servants, beauty treatments and delicious foods. But Esther is lonely and afraid.

Finally, Esther's turn comes. She has never been with a man before, and certainly not one as old and powerful as the king. But she goes bravely. Xerxes finds her to be not just beautiful but kind, gentle and wise. He makes her queen in Vashti's place.

The story could end there. But God has more in mind. One of the king's officials plans to kill all the Jews in Persia. Esther's moment of destiny arrives. When Mordecai tells her she must go to the king, she hesitates. His reply has rung through other pivotal moments in history: "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Esther is terrified. The king has no idea she is Jewish. She must tell him and then try to find a way to save her people. With God's help she does all she has been called to do.



We remember Esther as a woman of beauty, courage, and resourcefulness. Someday we might need to use our position to help someone. We might not save an entire group of people, like Esther. We might help one child, one friend, one person in trouble. God will use us if we, like Esther, are willing.

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DAY TWO: Jochebed

Read: EXODUS 1:22–2:8

Jochebed holds her baby close. As this boy grows, the chance that Egyptian soldiers will hear him increases. He seldom cries loudly and nursing him quickly quiets any noise. But his babbling proves harder to contain. He smiles and makes such

sweet noises that Jochebed cannot bear to silence him every time. But when his chattering gets louder, his older sister Miriam looks at her mother with fear.

Jochebed remembers the basket she's been making. She imagines the sturdy basket as a boat and sees a solution. Well, perhaps not a solution, but at least a chance for his survival. While the boy sleeps, Jochebed quickly finishes the basket, then coats it with sticky tar to make it waterproof. She lets it dry, then puts her fed, sleeping baby boy inside and carries the basket to the river.

Miriam follows her mother to the water's edge. When Jochebed tells Miriam to watch the floating basket that holds her little brother, she backs away in fear. Her mother tells her just to watch, then report back what she sees. Hot tears fill Miriam's eyes as her mother walks away. Jochebed hatched a plan that will produce a man who will

save his people from slavery. Most certainly, she was afraid. Yet she acted in spite of her fear. The courage of a slave woman saves the Hebrew nation.



The next time we're afraid, let's remember Jochebed. We never know what God has planned, and our small act of bravery might be just what's needed for the next step.

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DAY THREE: Deborah

Read: JUDGES 4:1-16

The wise woman Deborah sits under a tree named after her, the Palm of Deborah. She rules Israel. So far Israel has only been led by men. But God chooses Deborah at this time in history. Deborah loves her people, but the way they ignore God and his laws upsets her.

Sisera, commander of the Canaanite armies, makes life miserable for the disobedient Israelites. His men steal crops and damage Israel's small villages. As Deborah sits under her palm, God speaks to her. He wants the Israelite commander Barak to take 10,000 soldiers and attack Sisera.

Barak is willing to do as God orders. Except he's afraid of Sisera with his thousands of soldiers and 900 chariots. He says he will only go if Deborah goes with him. So she does, but she tells him that because of his hesitance, the honor of the victory will go to a woman instead of him.

Deborah and Barak stand at the front of Israel's soldiers. Looking over Sisera's army, Deborah tells Barak, "Go! God is with you!" Sisera and his soldiers and chariots run away instead of toward battle. The Israelite soldiers chase every one of them down. Sisera, however, has gotten away. The terrified commander hides in a woman's tent, and there meets his death at her hand.

Two brave women take command of a dangerous situation and, with God's help, gain victory for Israel. God doesn't necessarily see their gender. He sees their reverence for him and uses them to bring relief to weary Israel.



God still uses people who love him and follow him with their whole heart. Man, woman, girl, boy, a particular age—these are not what God needs or wants. When something must be done, God uses those who are willing and ready to follow him.

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DAY FOUR: Ruth

Read: RUTH 2

Ruth picks up a short straw with its attached heads of grain and slips it into the cloth slung over her shoulder. Gathering enough grain by picking up only the little bits the reapers leave behind takes long hours. She sees a reaper drop a small

bundle of grain, and she hurries to pick it up as soon as he moves on. Then another and another small bundle is dropped in front of her—almost as if the reapers were doing it on purpose, she marvels—and she quickly gathers enough to feed herself and Naomi.

Unknown to Ruth, the owner of the field (Boaz) has ordered his reapers to help her (see verses 15–16). Boaz has heard about how loving she's been to her mother-in-law Naomi. He's learned how passionately she responded when Naomi told her to return to Moab, when she said, "Don't tell me to leave you. I'll go with you. Your land will be my land. Your God will be my God."

Now, as Ruth cares for old and emotionally broken Naomi, Boaz cares for Ruth. He not only tells his men to drop extra grain, he tells them to protect her from danger, then also makes sure she has food and water during the heat of the day.

When Ruth returns home and tells Naomi where she's gotten so much grain, Naomi's wrinkled face breaks into a smile. Ruth follows Naomi's instructions on how to approach Boaz. In the end, Boaz recognizes that he should care (no, wants to care) for them both, and he marries Ruth.

It can seem like a fairytale. Poor, foreigner Ruth and old, sad Naomi find a prince and are saved from starvation. Oh, but this story is so much more than a fairy tale. It's about a God who orchestrates encounters and uses circumstances to extend the family line that will produce the Messiah our Savior. All because Ruth refused to turn back. Take a minute to read (and maybe memorize) her words in Ruth 1:16. They are worth remembering.



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DAY FIVE: Sarah

Read: GENESIS 17:15–18:15; 21:1–7

Sarah shifts carefully on her bed of blankets. She hurts from giving birth. She tries to relax, then holds out eager hands for her baby boy. She feels like her heart will burst. A baby boy of her own! Finally, after years of waiting, a woman too old to bear children holds her son in her arms. She is so overcome with joy that laughter bubbles out of her. The women inside the tent turn toward the sound and laugh along when they see Sarah's smile.

Sarah remembers a time years before when she also laughed. But that time she laughed at what seemed like a silly promise from God, a promise that she would have a son. Sarah was already old and past the time to have children. She couldn't imagine such a ridiculous thing. So, quite naturally, she laughed. However, the God who made that promise didn't forget his promise. Now, here Sarah is, holding the promised little one. She laughs quietly again, snuggling her baby close.

Abraham enters the tent, his eyes searching Sarah's. "You laughed," he says. Sarah doesn't seem to be able to help herself. She laughs again. The miraculous fulfillment of the promise! Abraham takes the baby into his arms. As he looks from that sweet face to the eyes of his old wife Sarah, he says, "The boy will be called Isaac," which means, "he laughs."



God makes a promise that seems laughable, impossible to humans. Then those same humans laugh with delight when God fulfills his promise. Remember what Sarah learned on this day; God will never promise something he cannot fulfill.

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DAY SIX: Mary

Read: MATTHEW 1:18-25

Mary's robe billows out behind her as her sandals slap the hard packed dirt in rhythm with her quickening heartbeat. She knows she shouldn't be running through town as though she were still a child. But the events of the morning have blown every thought of dignity right out of her mind. The angel!



Mary flies through the entrance of her home in Nazareth, not even stopping to take off her sandals. She runs through the courtyard.

"Momm!" she cries. Startled, Mary's mother looks up, and then smiles. Such a wonderful daughter, her Mary.

Grasping her mother's hand, Mary speaks of the dazzling angel she has just seen. A baby boy will soon grow within her. This baby, the angel says, will be the Messiah.

Mary sees the smile on her mother's face waver and then fade. When her father comes home, he questions Mary again and again, as if he doesn't believe her. Then her brothers. Even a few neighbors. They all look at her and frown, whispering together. No one believes her.

That night Mary wipes the tears from her face. What will Joseph think? If her own family doesn't believe her, how will her future husband react? Placing her hand over her flat belly, she wonders what will become of her when the baby begins to grow. What will she do if everyone turns away? Mary then recalls the angel's words, and in an instant peace comes flooding in. She remembers how she answered Gabriel: "I am God's servant girl. I give myself to God's plans."

Though Mary doesn't know what the future holds, she is sure of one thing. God has spoken to her through a holy angel. She will trust him. Wherever her adventure with God takes her, she will always say yes, even when it seems scary. We can say yes too! Whatever God has planned for our future, whatever our adventure, we can seek God and follow him all along the way, like young Mary.

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DAY SEVEN: Lydia

Read: ACTS 16:11-15

Lydia shuts the gate of her house in Philippi behind her, then walks down the path toward the river. Her rich purple robes swirl around her as she walks, good advertising for her business. She feels lighthearted and thankful for the opportunity to gather on the Sabbath to pray with other women who follow God. Each Sabbath meeting offers a blessing and a time to get to know God more deeply. Arriving at the usual place, she notices several men talking with the women.

Coming closer, Lydia hears the men speak of a Son of God, one who had lived, died, and rose again. Interested, Lydia sits down and listens more closely. She senses a stirring in her heart, something she has only experienced a few times. She feels God calling her, calling her to believe the message of these men.

Lydia closes her eyes, presses her hands against her chest, trying to drown out any distraction. Listening closely, she absorbs what these men are saying about this Jesus they follow. When they invite any who believe in Jesus to be baptized, she jumps to her feet, eager to take this next step in her faith.

Lydia's heart is tender and open to what the Holy Spirit impresses there. Lydia's business in selling purple cloth has made her a wealthy woman. Her large home will allow Paul and those with him to be comfortable while they stay in Philippi. God doesn't see Lydia as a woman with no part to play in the advance of the Good News. Instead, he sees a capable, strong woman, willing to do as God asks. Her willing spirit allows God to work in the city of Philippi.



God sees you too and knows the part you play in his kingdom. As you grow up, be like Lydia. Use your gifts for God's work. Use your abilities to help others. Use your love to spread the heart of Jesus wherever you go.

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