

Biblical Case Studies

A. Old Testament Case Study: *Miriam and the Midwives*

Exodus 2:2–10

[Jocebed] conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister [Miriam] stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses.

1. How did the mid-wives demonstrate their hope in the covenant promise? How did Jocebed? How about Miriam?
2. What qualities of a life-giver did these women express?
3. What characteristics of the covenant do you see in their actions?

B. Old Testament Case Study: *Esther*

Esther 4:13–14 (For further study, see *Leadership for Women in the Church*, pp. 103–108)

Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

1. What was the key to Esther’s confidence?
2. What are some of the things Mordecai avoided doing in motivating Esther to obedience?
3. What do we learn about Mordecai’s relationship with Esther?
4. How was Esther a life-giver?
5. How was Esther a wise leader?

C. Old Testament Case Study: *Hannah*

1 Samuel 1:1–28 (For further study, see *Leadership for Women in the Church*, pp. 78–83, 94.)

The Birth of Samuel

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph an Ephrathite. He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the door-post of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life and no razor shall touch his head.”

As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you. “But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as (a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.” And she said “Let your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”

Samuel Given to the LORD

The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.” “Elkanah,” her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; (only, may the LORD establish his word.” So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him

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up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, “Oh, my lord As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”

1. How did Hannah respond to Peninnah’s verbal attacks?
2. What does the text say may have been a reason for Hannah to refuse to be drawn into verbal attacks with Peninnah?
3. How did Hannah respond to her husband’s insensitivity?
4. What did Hannah seem to understand about her husband?
5. Why did Hannah not remain silent when she was accused by Eli?
6. What is the relationship between what Hannah knows about the character of God and how she responded to situations and relationships in her life?
7. How was Hannah’s life a testimony to biblical womanhood?

D. New Testament Case Study: *Priscilla*

Acts 18:1-3, 11, 19, 24-26 (For further study, see *Leadership for Women in the Church*, pp. 61-66)

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tent-makers by trade And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

- Priscilla's focus on the Lord and her desire to glorify Him was manifested in four ways: availability, adaptability, anticipation, and ability. How was she an example of biblical womanhood in each of these?

E. New Testament Case Study: *Dorcas*

Acts 9:36-42 (For further study, see *Leadership for Women in the Church*, pp. 61-66)

Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

1. What is the first thing we learn about Dorcas' character?
2. What are some evidences that Dorcas lived covenantally rather than autonomously?
3. How is Dorcas an example of community and compassion?
4. Who is a woman in our church who is living the legacy of Dorcas by doing good works and caring for others?