

## Study Helps

# Women of the Bible

## Mothers Undaunted: Naomi, Hannah, and Deborah

### Naomi

Read **Ruth 1, 4:13–17**

Naomi was a woman who trusted in the sovereignty of the Lord, seeking His will to guide her and her family. As Naomi decides to return to her native Bethlehem, she forms a special bond with her daughter-in-law Ruth. Naomi personifies God's loyalty and love and displays it to her daughter-in-law, drawing Ruth into her own faith.

1. As Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem, what does she tell her daughters-in-law to do? Why should they do this?

Go back to their mothers' homes (in Moab). Naomi believes they have no reason to stay with her, as she would surely not have any more sons, and even if she did, they would have to wait many long years if they wanted to marry them. It would be better for them to go back to their people and their gods.

2. How does Naomi serve as the vehicle of Ruth's journey along the path God had chosen for her?

Ruth chooses to stay with Naomi, as she returns to Bethlehem. To help provide food for Naomi and herself, Ruth offers to glean (pick up the leftover grains) in a field belonging to Boaz, from the family line of Elimelech. Boaz eventually marries Ruth and Ruth's descendents include Jesse, David, and Jesus.

3. Look at **Ruth 1:22**. How does the timing of Naomi's return to Bethlehem hint at what God is about to provide?

Naomi arrives in Bethlehem at the beginning of the first barley harvest, just after the famine has ended. The renewed fullness of the land coincides with how God will soon be giving renewed fullness to Naomi's life.

4. Upon returning to Bethlehem, how does Naomi feel? (**Ruth 1:20–21**) What event causes Naomi's emptiness to be changed to fullness? (**Ruth 4:14–17**)

Naomi feels bitter, empty, afflicted, misfortunate. The birth of Ruth's son, Obed, is the one who renews her life and will sustain her in her old age. Note that Naomi had advised Ruth in her relationship with Boaz (3:1-4).

5. Why are Boaz and Ruth mentioned in Matthew 1:5? They are in the lineage of Jesus. It was through their family that the Savior for all people would be brought into this world.

## Hannah

Read **1 Samuel 1:1–2:11, 2:19–21**

God recognized Hannah's faithfulness and purity of heart, and rewarded her with the son she so longed for. Hannah's devotion to her heavenly Father remained as she dedicated her son, Samuel, to the Lord and entrusted him to the care of the synagogue. Samuel grew to be an important representative of God during the time between the rule of the judges to the reign of the kings.

1. How would you describe Elkanah's feelings toward Hannah? (v.5, v.23)

Loved her more than his other wife and trusted her to do the right thing

2. What circumstances contributed to Hannah's sorrow?

Inability to bear children and taunting by the other wife, Peninnah

3. While Hannah's family was at Shiloh, making sacrifices to God, Hannah went to the temple to pray. Eli the priest observed Hannah and her grief. What did he think she was doing? What was Hannah's response? (v.15–16)

He thought she was drunk because her lips were moving while she was praying; she told Eli that she was deeply troubled and was praying out of anguish and grief. Be sure to emphasize that Hannah was a woman of prayer even during her time of trial (1:7, 12–16, 27)

4. After Samuel's birth, Hannah nursed him for about three years, during which time she did not go with her family to Shiloh to make sacrifices. After Samuel had been weaned, she brought Samuel, along with a young bull and other offerings, to Shiloh for what purpose?

To offer him to the Lord to be raised by Eli

5. Re-read 2: 1–12. What is the focus Hannah's prayer? She is rejoicing, praising and thanking God for the goodness He has shown her and His chosen people. Her joy is not just that she has a son, but that Good has answered her prayer.

## Deborah

1. After seeing the oppression of her people, Deborah summons Barak and tells him to do what? What was Barak's objection and the ensuing response of Deborah?

Go summon 10,000 men and go to Mount Tabor, to await Deborah as she lures Sisera and his chariots into their hands. “I’ll only go if you go too. If you don’t go, I’m not going either.” Deborah says she will go but the credit will go to a woman, not you.

2. In **Judges 5:7**, Deborah describes herself as “a mother in Israel.” What kinds of things do mothers do? How do these things relate to Deborah? **Answers will vary: nurture, teach, discipline, protect, provide for physical needs (food, shelter)**

3. What do these verses say about mothers?

**Proverbs 31:26, 30** – She speaks with wisdom and is a faithful instructor; she fears the Lord

**Deuteronomy 21:18-19** – She curbs rebelliousness in her child

**Proverbs 1:8** – Mothers teach their children

**Isaiah 49: 15** – Mothers are compassionate

**Isaiah 66:13** – Mothers comfort their children

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8** – Mothers are gentle with their children, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them

4. Discuss how the attributes of mothers are a reflection of what God does for His children?

**Our heavenly Father instructs, corrects, cares, and comforts us. His care and compassion are seen most clearly in the gift of His Son to be the Savior of all people.**