

Mary Davis

Women of Faith

From the Old Testament



 **8-Session Bible Study**

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Women of Faith: From the Old Testament
A Good Book Guide
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Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God's word as "a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we've discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They're perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let's take a look at what is included in each session.

Talkabout: Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

Investigate: These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

Apply: These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

Explore More: These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

Getting Personal: These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

Pray: Here, you're invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you've seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven't got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you'll find a **Leader's Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God's light-giving word.

Why Study Women of Faith?

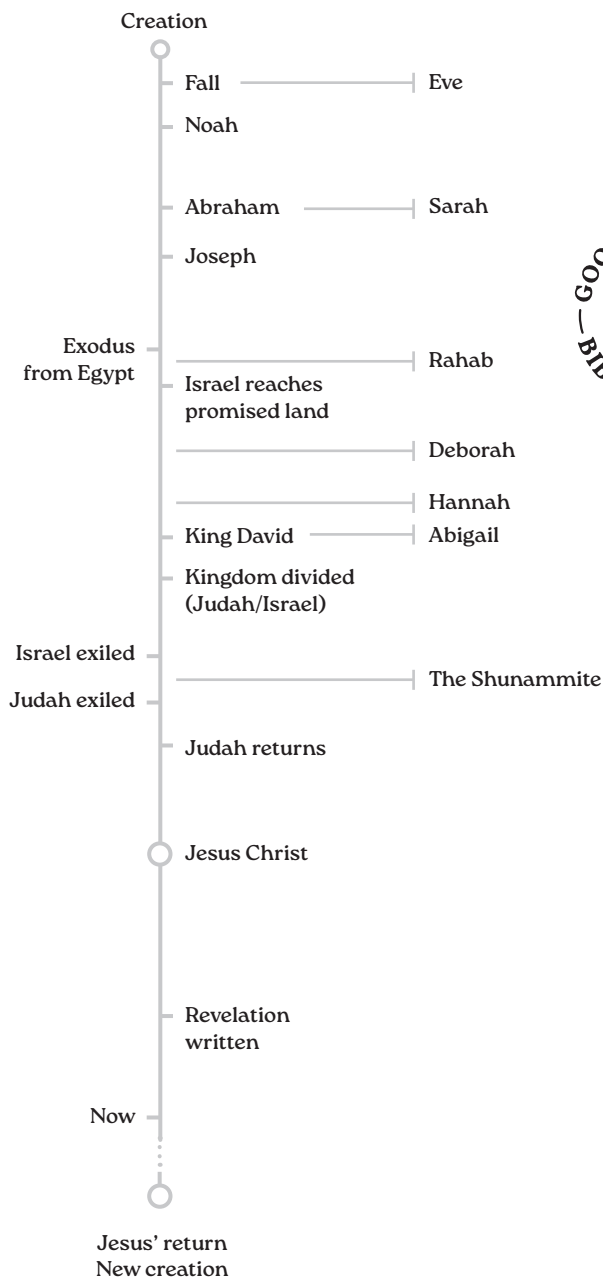
So, what's this book all about? Women clergy? Nuns? Saints and martyrs? Actually, none of these. *Women of Faith* investigates eight women from the Old Testament—women who, despite the differences of time and culture, had the same ordinary lives, common hardships and unforeseen crises that we experience. They lived in a world with the same problems as ours. They experienced the same sort of doubts, discouragements, griefs and lapses into sin that we do. And the same almighty, holy, loving God, who intervened in their lives, still speaks to us today.

Despite the fact that the Bible was written in male-dominated cultures, in every epoch of history covered by the Scriptures there are important accounts involving women. Their actions and experiences play a significant part in the overall story of the Bible—the relationship between God and humanity, and God's purposes in sending Jesus Christ to our world.

We look at these eight women in the order they appear in the Old Testament, to get some idea of their place in Israel's history. While one of these is an idealised character (the wife of Proverbs 31), the other seven are real, historical figures. They are not perfect paragons that will simply defeat and discourage us. Nor are they merely ornamental “props”, spicing up the Bible with a bit of female interest, but with nothing useful to show. Between them they represent a whole variety of backgrounds, situations and experiences. Their stories involve both events of national importance and also intensely personal family matters. Their reputations range from honourable to disreputable; their actions from successful to disastrous.

So what relevance do the stories of these women have for us today? First, we can learn how God really is interested in people (ordinary, sinful people) like us, and how he can use us to bring about his own perfect and loving plans. Among other things, they also teach us how (and how not) to respond to challenges such as temptation, doubt, fear, discouragement, intense longing, despair, and all the duties and demands of everyday life. Finally, we will discover that behind each woman stands the Lord himself—always loving, always faithful, always in control, always working out his perfect plans, now revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

By studying the lives of these women, not only can we learn practical lessons about how to live God's way in God's world, but we ourselves can come to know God, in Jesus Christ, for ourselves.



1

Eve: From Doubt to Disaster

Genesis 3

Talkabout

1. Share some experiences you have had of putting your trust in someone who let you down. What have you learned about who can be trusted?

Investigate

2. To put our passage in context, look up the following key verses from Genesis 1 and 2 and write down a brief summary of each.
 - 1:1
 - 1:26

- 1:31

- 2:16-17

- 2:18

- 2:22-23

- 2:25

Read Genesis 3

3. What tricks does the snake use to tempt Eve (v 1, 4-5)?

4. What does he want Eve to think God is like?

5. Look at how Eve responds to the snake. Why do you think she responds like this (v 2-3, 6)?
6. God had given a special role to Eve (2:18). In what way does she fail to carry it out (3:6)?
7. What do you think was at the heart of Adam and Eve's sin?

Explore More | OPTIONAL

Read Philippians 2:5-11

- Compare the attitude of Jesus towards God with that of Adam and Eve. What strikes you about the differences?

Apply

8. What bits of God's word do you find hardest to trust? Why?

- What should we be doing about this?

- What helps us to trust God more and how can we help one another?

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

What impression of God might you be giving to those around you? That he's totally trustworthy, a God of goodness and love? Or something closer to the snake's picture of God?

Investigate

In the beginning, everything in God's creation was very good (1:31). All relationships were perfect and harmonious (between humans and God, between man and woman, between humans and the world) and everything was under God's rule. Now sin has entered the world and everything is spoiled.

9. Along with sin, what other terrible things have now become part of life in the garden?

10. What sentence does God pronounce on the snake (v 14-15)?

11. What will childbirth and marriage be like for the woman?

12. What will work be like for the man?

13. What signs of God's mercy can you see (v 20-24)?

Explore More | OPTIONAL

- How do both God's promise in Genesis 3:15, and God's action in 3:21, preview God's solution to the mess that human rebellion has caused? (See Hebrews 2:14.)

Apply

14. What have you learned about God from this study?

- Do you agree that not trusting God has terrible consequences? Why/why not?

- When Christians forget or ignore the consequences of not trusting God, what happens to holy living and evangelism?
- How can we help one another not to make this mistake? (See Philippians 3:14-21, especially verses 19b and 20.)

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

How do you think this passage should affect the way you think and what you do?

Pray

Genesis 3 reminds us of how seriously God takes sin. Spend some time saying sorry to God for the ways in which you fail to trust him.

Thank God that, in the new creation, everything will be perfect again. You may like to read Revelation 21:3-4 and turn the verses into a prayer of thanks and praise.