Women of the Bible

Diocese-Based Leadership Training Program
Mennonite Churches of East Africa (KMC/KMT)

Written by: Gloria Bontrager
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Creation of Woman – “Eve, the Mother of all Living”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sarah - An Example of Trust, Obedience, Respect</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hannah, a Woman of Faith and Prayer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mary of Bethany, A Woman who Loved Deeply</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mary, Mother of Jesus - Purity and Openness to God’s Will</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Potipher’s Wife – Woman of Poor Character</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abigail – Wife of an Unbeliever, Peacemaker</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hospitality, Good Works, and Godliness</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Widow of Zarephath – Suffering</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Christian Home – Passing on the Faith</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objectives:
1. To learn from the examples of women in the Bible.
2. To learn to know ourselves better as women.
3. To learn to know and respond to God specifically as women of faith.
Lesson 1. The Creation of Woman – “Eve, the Mother of all Living”

Read Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:18, 20-25

1. Eve was made in the Image of God; created equally with Adam and called “very good”; they together experienced fellowship, love, perfection, and harmony with each other and God.

2. Eve was created as a companion suitable for Adam. She was given the same task as Adam—to take care of the garden. God created man and woman to complete each other and together they carry the image of God. (Genesis 1:27) She was a partner who was equally capable intellectually, socially, and physically able to assist in procreation. They shared their love and respect for each other and for God. Eve had the “perfect world.”

3. Read Genesis 3:1-20. Woman was deceived; Satan caused her to doubt what God had said. She made a choice to listen, then answer Satan according to her understanding of what God had said; by lingering with Satan and giving him an audience, he became bold, suggesting God was lying to them and not giving the best to them.

4. Woman was drawn by her desire (for the fruit), made a choice (outside of the will of God), then immediately entangled her husband in her sin by offering it to him. He also chose independently to eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve’s failure to obey God voluntarily out of love for Him, giving into her own desire, and influencing her husband brought devastation to their perfect world.

5. Their sin of disobedience resulted in drastic changes for them and the world God had created—the soil produced thorns and thistles; they gathered and produced food to eat by hard work; the serpent was cursed. Adam and Eve were sent from the perfect surroundings of the garden, Eve would bear children with pain and suffering, woman would forever seek the favor of her husband and physical death was sure to come. Their sin also destroyed the beautiful relationship they had with God causing a continual striving within to reconnect with God.

Questions to Discuss:

1. How does a woman reflect the image of God? (Look at these scriptures—Isa. 66:12-13; Isa. 42:14; Isa. 46:3-4; Isa. 49:15; Psa. 22:9-10; Psa. 71:6) Is it different from man’s reflection of God? (Isa. 1:2; Deut. 8:15-16; Isa. 40:11)

2. Discuss the following saying: “Woman was made not from man’s head, to be above him, nor from his feet, to be trampled on, but created out of his side to equal him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved.” (Proverbs 12:4)

3. Genesis 2:24 establishes the first marriage. What did marriage consist of according to this passage?

4. Name and discuss Eve’s sins. How does her sin contrast with the example of Jesus in Philippians 2:1-8?

5. What are some results that come from our sins today?
Lesson 2. Sarah – An Example of Trust, Obedience, Respect


1. Trust and Obedience Read Genesis 12:1-5. Sarah was the beautiful wife of a wealthy and respected man in a flourishing city. Because of her husband’s encounter with the Living God, she needed to leave home and go to a place unknown to them. By obeying God they were promised that from their offspring, a great nation would be formed through whom all nations would be blessed. Sarah trusted her husband’s spiritual leadership and God who spoke to him, so obeyed and left with him, to unknown circumstances and difficulties.

2. Respect, Honor and Faith maintained amidst struggle. Read Genesis 12:8-20. Abraham made a bad decision that dishonored Sarah and placed her in a risky situation but God was faithful to her and intervened on her behalf. God honors and blesses women who maintain honor and respect for their husbands despite their failures. He can also use such experiences to increase our faith and trust in Him. Sarah was an example of faith and scripture says she adorned herself by accepting her husband’s authority, her obedience to him, and not submitting to fear. (1 Peter 3:5-6)

3. Impatience ends in Trouble - Read Genesis 16:1-6. When the promise of a child was delayed, Sarah moved ahead with her own wisdom and suggested to Abraham that he should sleep with her slave-woman so that God’s promise would be fulfilled. Sarah’s sin of unbelief and impatience brought sorrow and strife into the family. Her failure to remain in God’s plan resulted in blame, jealousy, separation and humiliation between two women. Hagar and her son although loved by Abraham, were sent away and developed into an age long conflict between the two ancestral lines of Abraham.

4. Despite failures by God’s chosen people, God remained true to his Covenant. (Read Genesis chapters 18, 20, and 21) Everything was fulfilled as God had promised in His own time, despite their failures, their limitations of age, and of their wavering faith. Both Sarah and Abraham are honored in the New Testament among people of faith. They are set up as examples of the process of growing faith and for their walk of obedience with the God of covenants. (Hebrews 11:8-12; 1 Peter 3:6)

Questions to discuss:

1. How can faith guide us in the normal struggles we find within marriage? Give examples from the life of Sarah and Abraham.

2. What does this story teach us about the faithfulness and love of God even when we disappoint God and follow our own way at times?

3. Why is fear a major factor for women? What should we do to manage our fears?

4. Discuss how faith and patience often go together. Why is trusting in our own solutions dangerous? How do we learn to wait on God to work?

5. How is adornment defined in 1 Peter 3:4?

6. How do we cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit?
Lesson 3. Hannah – a Woman of Faith and Prayer

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-28

1. Hannah found herself in a difficult marriage. She was one of two wives of a man who honored God. Her husband loved her deeply even though she had no children. Her co-wife had children and constantly reminded Hannah about her infertility, disrupting the home with constant irritation, provocation, and conflict. Her husband further complicated the matter by showing favoritism toward Hannah, creating additional jealousy and strife.

2. Hannah often wept, refused to eat, and cried out to God in regards to her situation. She must have known God as a God of miracles, from her knowledge of the history of the patriarchs such as Abraham and Isaac. She knew God as one who hears the despair of people, who was faithful to His people, so she continued to bring her deep sorrow to Him hoping he would hear her plea for a child.

3. In presenting herself to the Lord during the time of their yearly temple visit, Hannah broke down, weeping openly in public showing her deep distress. However, she took the bold step of making a vow before the Lord that showed the sincerity of her heart and the faith that she had in God. She also addressed God boldly, as “O Lord of Hosts,” (acknowledging him for who he was) while recognizing her low estate, and pleaded for the opportunity to serve Him. She requested a child whom she then would dedicate to God for the rest of his life. Her request, once offered, was left in God’s hands, and she left the temple with peace in her heart and the assurance that He had heard.

4. Hannah’s prayer is answered and with thankfulness she follows through on her promise to God, bringing the child to the temple and presenting him back to the Lord. (1 Samuel 1:26-28) Note her prayer of thanksgiving in 1 Samuel 2.

Questions for discussion:

1. God sees our suffering and hears our cries for help (Exodus 2:23-25) Why does he not answer immediately when we come to him in our suffering?

2. How does knowing God and understanding how he worked in peoples’ lives in the past help us to have more confidence and trust that he will answer our prayers?

3. What are some components of Hannah’s prayer that we could use as a model for our prayers?

4. Should persistence and bold trust (such as promises and vows) be used today to ask things of God? (Hebrews 10:19-23)

5. Look at Hannah’s prayer in chapter 2. What are appropriate responses to answered prayer?

6. Discuss the pain of childlessness. How can we be supportive rather than accusatory or proud in these situations?
Lesson 4. Mary of Bethany – A Woman who Loved Deeply

Read Luke 10:38-42)

1. Mary chooses to take the non-traditional woman’s role of sitting at Jesus’ feet and learning from him, rather than being the perfect hostess and being concerned about food and hospitality as Martha does. Although her sister complained about her not taking responsibility, Jesus affirmed her choice of priorities, stating she had chosen wisely and chides Martha for judging her sister’s different expression of her love.

2. In John 11:17-37, Mary is mourning the loss of her brother and is confused and not understanding Jesus’ choice in delaying to come when he had been informed of her brother’s sickness. She had faith in Jesus’ ability to heal his beloved friend, so why did he not prevent his death? Even while not understanding and being deeply hurt with this turn of events, Mary’s deep love and confidence in Jesus remained intact. Jesus depth of love and caring for this family is evident in his response of weeping with them. But God’s purpose (that they would believe) was accomplished better through the death and resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

3. Mary’s deep love is further displayed a while later when Jesus visits their home again (John 12:1-8) and she has another opportunity to express her love. Again she willingly risks the misunderstanding of her actions, and anoints Jesus’ feet with an expensive perfume. Her acts of dedication to and worship of Jesus were evidence of her belief in Jesus as the Messiah and expressed her gratitude for the change he brought about in her own life. She remembered that he had spoken of the suffering he must suffer and knew that the time had come. Out of her deep love for him she anointed Jesus’ body as her final loving act.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do we define love for God or Jesus?
2. What are some acts of love we do to show our love for Jesus today?
3. How do we respond to disappointments or to unanswered requests we bring to Jesus?
4. Death of a loved one is often seen as God’s judgment or lack of God’s love? What is a proper view of death? (2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15)
5. What are some extravagant ways of showing our love for Jesus?
6. Give some examples of ways we can be misunderstood in our devotion to Jesus?
Lesson 5. Mary, Mother of Jesus - Purity and Openness to God’s Will

Read Luke 1:26-38; 2:6-14, 17-19; Matthew 1:18-25

1. Mary was a virgin of Nazareth, young, innocent, of little influence, power, or recognition. However she was addressed by the angel Gabriel as favored one, “The Lord is with you.” Mary herself was surprised and wondered at this greeting.

2. She most certainly had nurtured a relationship with the Lord God. Every Jewish woman hoped she would be the one through whom the promised Messiah would come. Mary appears to have been a God-fearing girl who knew the scriptures and looked expectantly toward the redemption of Israel. In addition, she had a willing heart to be used of God. When the angel told her she was chosen to bring the Savior into the world, she asked how this was to happen to her as a virgin. She believed in God’s word and surrendered to his will without hesitation.

3. Did Mary even think of the consequences of her surrender to God’s will? In the Jewish tradition, a woman found pregnant before marriage was considered unfaithful to her vows and could be stoned. In agreeing to God’s plan, Mary not only sacrificed her reputation, but also risk rejection by Joseph, and being stoned to death. But Mary’s reaction to this exceptional privilege of being the mother of the Messiah is recorded in Luke 1:46-55. Her song exalts God, is full of praise and gratitude to be chosen to bring salvation to God’s people.

4. Mary, as mother of the Messiah, could have been overwhelmed and frightened with the unusual happenings surrounding Jesus’ birth. Instead she responded by remembering the promises that had been foretold of him and trusted God to fulfill them. (Luke 2:19) She capably took on the challenge of raising her son. He grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40) She accepted her role as secondary to his, but used her influence to gently bring people to recognize who he was. (John 2:1-11) Her faith in God’s purposes and a commitment to his will gave her strength that carried her through the hard experiences she was called to bear during his life. When he reminded people that his earthy family was of secondary importance, she didn’t take offence, but continued daily to support his ministry. (Matthew 12:46-50) In the end, she stood at the foot of his cross, saw him mocked, tormented, and dying the death of a criminal. Even after his death, Mary is mentioned among those with the other disciples in the upper room for prayer. (Acts 1:14) Mary did not dwell on her personal loss but joined with others in the ongoing work of God among them.

Questions to Discuss:

1. Name the qualities of spirit that God found in Mary and was able to use for his purposes.
2. Mary expressed her doubts to the angel. Is it all right to question what God says?
3. How do we remain strong and make right decisions even though we know we will be misunderstood by others?
4. What can we learn from Mary when God asks us to experience hard things?
5. What function does suffering serve in the life of true disciples? (Romans 5:3)
6. Why did Mary say these words, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38)?
Lesson 6. Potipher’s Wife – A Woman of Poor Character

Genesis 39:1-20

1. Potipher’s wife had everything. She had a husband who was a high ranking official in Egypt, so probably had a large house with many furnishings, had plenty to eat and a lot of clothing to wear. Yet she was still empty inside and in seeking for something to fill that emptiness, she turned to using her sexuality to allure her husband’s servant Joseph. She repeatedly offered herself to him, expecting to find satisfaction in passion and sex alone. But Joseph’s respect for God and for his master prevented him from dishonoring them. When her initial scheme failed, she found a way to accuse Joseph before Potipher, landing him in jail. Her initial sin of lust, lead her into another sin, that of lying and betrayal.

2. Sexuality was planned by God in creation to bring security, deep intimacy, and love for one’s partner in the commitment of marriage (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:31) Sexuality is honorable, not to be ashamed of, but also not meant to be defiled (Hebrews 13:4). According to Proverbs enjoying the sexual privileges of marriage is wholesome (Proverbs 5:15-19) Paul in his writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:2-9) encourages husband and wife to use their sexual rights to curb adultery and immorality in the church. Marriage manages passions and self control in this area of life.

3. Luke 7:36-50 tells the story of Jesus’ encounter with a woman of poor character. While his host was critical of Jesus allowing this woman to touch him, Jesus saw within the woman to her real need of acceptance and forgiveness, and affirmed her for her action of love and for her faith.

4. Another account of Jesus’ interaction with a woman caught in adultery is found in John 8:3-11. Jesus wards off the accusers by confronting them with their own sins, then places no judgement on the woman, but instructs her to leave her sin behind and to sin no more.

5. Jesus’ teaching concerning adultery and divorce is found in Matthew 5:27-32. He states that even a look of lust is the same thing as committing adultery. Our bodies as members of Christ’s body should not be joined in acts of fornication which defile the body of Christ and one’s own spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:13b-20) Our bodies are the temple of the Living God, therefore should not be defiled by unclean and unholy partnerships. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16) Without the commitment of marriage, passion and sex become lust and craving which is degrading to another and to one’s self. (Proverbs 6:32) When sexuality is used for the wrong purposes it results in guilt, self-accusation, increased loneliness, and shame, and becomes a vicious cycle of misery. (Proverbs 5:3-6; Proverbs 23:27-28; Proverbs 6:27-29) Those who participate in works of the flesh, including fornication and adultery will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21) As Christians we are charged to cleanse ourselves from such defilement of body and spirit and live a life of holiness(2 Corinthians 7:1).

Questions for discussion:

1. Deeds are the fruit of thoughts. A person acts on what she thinks and becomes what is nurtured in her spirit. (Proverbs 23:7) Discuss how Potipher’s wife sin progressed from one thing to the next.
2. We usually think of lust as a man’s problem. Is this also a problem for women today?

3. What are your thoughts about sexuality? How does a woman’s behavior (modesty) set healthy boundaries between men and women?

4. What should a Christian response be to those caught up in sexual impurity?

5. It is common for sex to be thought as unclean, unholy, or even evil. Is this biblical?

6. How can women of the church address the issues of sexual impurity in the church?
Lesson 7. Abigail – Wife of an Unbeliever and a Peacemaker

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-31)

1. Abigail was clever and beautiful; Nabal, her husband was rich, but was mean unreasonable. David was the anointed king of Israel, but fleeing from Saul and wandering in the wilderness with his men. They provided Nabal’s workers protection from raiders while they were shearing his sheep. David’s men, coming peaceably, requested food of Nabal for their holy day. Nabal responded negatively, dishonoring David’s name and disregarding his ability to assist David in this way. When David’s men reported the response of Nabal, David is angered and gets ready to destroy this arrogant, insulting man and all his household.

2. One of the young men recognized the impending crisis and went to Abigail who immediately hurried to prepare a peace offering to take to David. She approached him admitting the guilt of her husband and pleading for forgiveness. She also reasoned with him concerning the folly of revenge and the blessings of peace that would be on him for not taking vengeance in his own hand. She also reminded David of his calling and mission for the Lord. Her “good sense” persuaded David and appeased his anger.

3. Abigail’s manner of speaking, attitude and words brought a turn around in a volatile situation. The way we use our tongue as women often makes or breaks a crisis. We are advised in Psalms 34:13-14 to manage our tongues, seeking peace rather than strife. Ecclesiastes 3:7 and Psalms 39:1-3 suggest there are times to speak and times to refrain from speaking and our words can be choice silver and bring healing (Proverbs 10:20) or sharp, sword thrusts or deadly arrows to a person (Proverbs 12:18). In the New Testament, the epistle of James addresses the problem of taming and controlling the tongue. (James 1:26; 3:5-12; 4:11) Blessing and cursing with the same tongue, speaking evil or slandering a brother or sister, speaking harshly or indiscreetly to one another (1 Timothy 5:1) should not be present in the Christian church.

4. A peaceable attitude also justified the prostitute Rahab and she did not perish with those who were disobedient. (Hebrews11:31) She had most likely heard of the mighty acts of the God of Israel and when given the chance to believe through the testimony of the spies, she chose by faith to act on their word, and seek peace with them. Through this she eventually became a mother among the Israelite lineage of Christ.

5. Living in peace with an unbelieving spouse is a challenge for a marriage. However, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 suggests that a believing spouse can be the saving influence for her husband and her children, even somehow making them holy through her actions and faith. Another passage in 1 Peter 3:1 talks about winning over one’s spouse without a word, her conduct, purity and reverence is an effective testimony to God’s grace. The verses in 1 Corinthians 7 also speak negatively on the point of separation and divorce because of difference of faith. Verse 15 sums it up with, “It is to peace that God has called you.” Jesus words concerning divorce are found in Matthew 5:31-32. Even though divorce was allowed in Moses’ law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), Jesus standard was higher and reminds us that divorce really isn’t an appropriate solution except in certain situations of infidelity and only leads to other sins for those involved. (Mark10:11-12; Luke 16:18)
Questions for discussion:

1. We are called to be wise as serpents, harmless (innocent) as doves Matthew 10:16. How did Abigail show her wisdom and her innocence?

2. Compare Abigail’s actions with the NT appeal to peace. (Romans 12:18-21) Does this scripture leave any room for revenge by us?

3. What does James say about our religion, if we cannot control our tongues? (James 1:26) What are some effects of an uncontrolled tongue?

4. Study the use of the tongue in the book of Proverbs. (Proverbs 15:1-2; Proverbs 5:3-4; 6:23-24; 19:13) How is the tongue used and what are the results?

5. How does having a peaceable attitude affect our faith? Use the example of Rahab.

6. Discuss the challenges of being married to an unbeliever. For what reasons does Jesus and the writers of the epistles encourage patience and forbearing in such a marriage? How do we reconcile these verses with 2 Corinthians 6:14?

7. In what circumstances may divorce be the right option?
Lesson 8. Hospitality, Good Works, and Godliness

1. The Shunammite Woman Read (2 Kings 4:8-22, 32-37) was a wealthy woman who was hospitable and invited Elisha who passed by regularly to have meals with them. She recognized him as a godly man, so discussed with her husband the possibility of making a room for him to stay in whenever he passed through. She used what she had to find a way to serve God, sharing her possessions with God’s servant. When Elisha wanted to bless her for her hospitality, he prayed for God to bless her with a son.

2. Martha of Bethany Read (Luke 10:38-42) Martha was used to providing hospitality for Jesus and his disciples, as they were friends of her family. It was an honor for her to have them come and stay whenever they needed a place to stay. But Martha became frustrated with all the details of getting food prepared, providing water for them, and making sure their every need was met. Because of her emphasis on hospitality, she didn’t have time to visit with her guests, and also became judgmental of Mary who was sitting, rather than helping her. Jesus admonishes Martha to give priority to tending her spirit and to be careful of judging another.

3. Dorcas (Read Acts 9:36-42) Dorcas was a disciple, devoted to good works and acts of charity. She had a talent that she used to bless others, especially widows. Joppa was a seacoast town and possibly there were more widows there due to many seamen and fishermen casualties. Perhaps she herself was a widow. In any case, she used what she had (her potential) to give support to others both physically and emotionally and was loved deeply because of her offering of love to them.

4. A woman who has reverence for God should be adorned with good works and the inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:4-5) not putting emphasis on outward physical appearance but on developing qualities of the inner person. Holy women of the OT used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands (1 Peter 3:5) 1 Timothy 2:15 encourages women to continue in faith, love and holiness with modesty. One’s appearance does reflect one’s character and often displays what is in one’s heart, therefore it is important to dress in a way that honors one’s body and the person of Jesus within us. 1 Timothy 3:11; 1 Timothy 4:7; Titus 2:3 and 1 Peter 3:2 broaden the scope of godliness to character traits of seriousness, temperance, faithfulness, wholesome speech, purity and reverence.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the virtues of hospitality? (Hebrews 13:2) What are the vices of hospitality?
2. Discuss the relationship between faith and good works. When can good works become a danger to us?
3. Discuss the influences around us that tend to cause us to emphasize outward beauty rather than inward beauty. How do qualities of the spirit affect our presentation to others?
4. What can we as women do to work at inner beauty and focus less on outer beauty?
5. The church emphasizes the woman’s role of submission in the church rather than their potential influence and participation in ministry. How can women find opportunity to use their gifts in the church?
Lesson 9. Widow of Zarephath – Suffering  
(Scripture background: Read 1 Kings 17:7-24)

1. This woman had come upon hard times. Her husband had died. Drought in the land caused a shortage of food and water, and she was on her last supply of oil and flour, enough to provide one more meal for her and her son. Upon going out to find firewood, she met a stranger recognizable as a holy man because of the way he dressed. He was Elijah, who himself was suffering due to the drought. God had sent him to this woman as his way of providing for his needs. He requested her to bring him a drink of water, then in addition, pled also for a bit of bread. When she explained her situation, Elijah instructed her, “Do not fear, go, fix the meal, but first bring it to me, then make for you and your son. For the Lord, the God of Israel, promises that the jar of meal and the bottle of oil will not fail until the Lord again sends rain on the earth!”

2. This woman was a pagan, not from Israel, but she had probably heard of the God of Israel. Her desperate situation and the promise of the prophet may have contributed to her willingness to do as he requested. Her first step of faith was her choice to trust (believe) the prophet’s word. Then in obeying his word and making food for him first, she found, miracle of miracles, enough flour and oil for her and her son! The Bible says she and he and her household ate for many days and their oil and meal continued to be provided for them. (vs.15, 16) Her step of faith in God became the stronghold of her life and kept God’s servant alive.

3. However, one day another disaster struck again. Her son became ill and died suddenly. Was she tempted to doubt God and his love for her? How could God have spared her son from starvation and then have him die of illness? Was she tempted to go back to her old beliefs? Had she done something to offend this God? The questions in her mind were many and in her sorrow she accused the man of God of having something against her. But Elijah brought the child and his questions before God, and then in faith, pled for the life of the child. At his request, the boy was revived and was restored to the widow. The gift of her son being brought back to her reinforced her faith in God’s love, and the testing of her faith taught her the faithfulness of God.

Questions to Discuss:

1. Many people in Zaraphath were suffering from the drought. What was God’s purpose in sending Elijah to this woman?

2. What two things made the woman open to trusting the man of God?

3. Where did suffering come from?

4. Even righteous people suffer. What is the basis for thinking that if we live right we will not suffer?

5. Give some examples of how God uses suffering for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28)

6. Hebrews 2:18 says that Jesus was tested and suffered for what reason?

7. What is the purpose of suffering according to James 1:3?

Read 2 Timothy 1:5; Ephesians 5:21-6:4

1. One of the most important tasks of mothers and grandmothers is to provide an atmosphere in the home that is helpful for a child to learn to love God and others. Paul recognized that Timothy’s faith had been nurtured by the faith of his grandmother Lois, and mother, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). A child learns quickly about faith at an early age as mothers take time to tell or read stories from the heroes of faith in the Bible. The influence mothers have on children is most importance between the ages of birth to seven. After that, a child learns also from his peers or other people. Children who have Biblical teaching and positive role models, develop positive character traits from what he hears or sees in the home, and will have a solid foundation of faith.

2. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (5:21-6:4) gives some guidance for the Christian home. He uses the home as an example of Christ’s loving relationship for the church (his bride). We are instructed to use Christ’s submission to God’s will to redeem his creation as our guide in our relationship with each other as husband and wife. Wives are to be honoring and respectful to their husbands even as they are to Jesus, as the head of the church. Husbands are to love their wives, giving unselfishly, caring, providing for, and honoring her even as he does his own body. So the marriage relationship should demonstrate Jesus’ love for the church (loving it above his own life), and the church submitting and being willingly led by Christ because of that love. Paul also teaches that the relationship between husband and wife supersedes other family relationships, and unites them as one body and flesh, committed to each other and to their children.

3. Children are instructed to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4), honoring them as commanded in the OT so they will be blessed with a long life. A child’s well-being is nurtured in a loving relationship between their father and mother. Loving obedience is the result of witnessing peace and love being demonstrated by his parents and by gentle instruction and discipline, not by harsh, authoritative demands by the parent. Proverbs 1:8-9 describes parents’ teaching as a “fair garland” on a child’s head and a “pendant” for his neck.

4. Within marriage, sexual activity is honorable. (Hebrews 13:4) As husband and wife “become one flesh,” a strength and depth of intimacy builds within them. Paul encourages a married couple to give conjugal rights to each other and not deprive each other the pleasures of physical intimacy because it binds them together and is God’s plan for managing passion. (1 Corinthians 7:2-9; Proverbs18:22)

Questions for Discussion:

1. In what ways do we best prepare the soil of children’s hearts to be open to God in their lives?
2. Think about and discuss: “The best gift a father can give to his children is to love his wife.”
3. What does the Bible mean by the term submit to one another?
4. Is honor and respect for authority more difficult for women than men?
5. Is “loving another as his own body” more difficult for a man than for a woman?
6. What are the components of Christ’s love for the church? How can this be a model for our marriages?

7. In what ways do we teach our children to honor us? Is forcing obedience from a child an appropriate technique?

8. How can we promote a healthier attitude toward sexuality and yet give it the honor it deserves? How do we teach children about sex?

9. How can you help your husband if you see changes within him of not caring for you and the children?

10. The first mention in the Bible of bride price is Genesis 24:42-44, 50-53. Is the bride price necessary? What is the benefit of the bride price? Are there any disadvantages to the bride price? What would you do if your daughter wants to marry without a bride price?