

Proverbs 31:23 – Three Wise Women, Part 2

“Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.”

~Proverbs 31:23

In Part 1 of our study on Proverbs 31:23, you saw a real-life picture of what an ungodly, unbiblically submissive wife looks like. You witnessed my sinful and wretched prayer life as well as my "holier than thou" attitude against my husband in which Satan so skillfully used to cause much strife and division in my household.

I allowed Satan to use *me* as a baseball bat to beat my husband (basically, I was beating my own head) and recklessly tear down my house with my own hands (Prov 14:1b).

“I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.”

~Romans 6:19

We will now turn our attentions to three *wise* women in the Bible that truly understood what biblical submission is all about. In His righteousness, the Lord our God saw fit to use these women as examples of what a Princess of the King really looks like: beautiful and precious character, calm, confident in Christ, quiet, peaceful, and a humble servant ready and eager to act on behalf of others when necessary; with no regard for her personal comforts or preferences because she fully trusts her *God* to care for *her* every need.

Who are these wonderful women? They are:

1. Zipporah – Moses’ wife
2. Ruth – Boaz’s wife, great-grandmother of King David and included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1-6)
3. Elizabeth – Zechariah’s wife and mother of John the Baptist



Zipporah

Read: Genesis 17:10-14 (highlight v. 14) and Exodus 4:24-26 (highlight v. 26)

A biblically submissive wife protects: LIFE

Right before verse 24, we see that God has called Moses to lead His people out of bondage and into the Promised Land. Moses was a foreshadowing of the Christ to come (Jn 1:17, Heb 9:19-24).

After the LORD commissioned Moses, and just before Moses even had the opportunity to enter Egypt, we read this frightening account in verse 24, “*At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.*”

To understand the importance of Exodus 4:24-26, we must first understand the Lord our God and His ways (Is 55:8-9, Jer 9:23-24), and what is most important to Him concerning man: to reconcile man into a right relationship with God the Father.

Moses was given the Law and was kept by the Law through the old covenant of physical circumcision. But when the Son, who is the Christ, came, the old covenant was dissolved and the new covenant was sealed with the blood of the Son of God; bringing salvation and freedom from the bondage of sin and circumcising our hearts (Col 2:11-14).

In fact, the actual Hebrew word used in Genesis 17:10-14 for covenant is בְּרִית *beriyth* which means: a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh).

This is why those of us who have repented and fully trusted our lives to Jesus, are called a "new creation". We have been "cut off" from the old self which lived in and for the flesh with its wicked passions and desires that war against God; and have been granted the immense blessing of entering into a "compact" with God to live in and through His Spirit that now dwells within us.

"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn... For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God."

~ Deuteronomy 10:16, Romans 2:28-29

Why did Zipporah, the wife of Moses suddenly choose to circumcise her son, then touch Moses' feet with the bloody knife and say, "*Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!*" (Exodus 4:25)?

While it is not written in Scripture, it is obvious she knew God's holy commandments and what was required to remain in a covenant relationship with Him (Genesis 17:14).

In God's awesome mercy, He chose to reveal to Zipporah, her husband Moses' error and great sin against God. Our heavenly Father knew Zipporah had a submissive, humble and reverent heart towards Him, so He graced her with the knowledge of the impending doom that was to come upon one of her family members.

And what did Zipporah do with this knowledge God so compassionately granted her? Did she puff up with pride because God revealed something to her that was not revealed to her husband? Did she think she was better or more holy than Moses because God showed her her husband's error so she could lord it over him, correct him and expect something in return (i.e., respect, reward, her husband's submission to her judgments, etc.)? No, this godly woman did no such thing. Instead, without any concern for herself, or what she might lose or gain, she acted out of her love, reverence and gratitude towards God and her family by quickly doing what her husband should have already done; pleading for their life, and submitting herself to her husband (even though it was his sin that caused this) by humbly throwing herself at Moses' feet while she spoke those gracious words that moved God's heart to relent from taking the life of someone she loved.

Contrary to popular belief, the Lord our God does not help those who can help themselves. Instead, He faithfully seeks to help those who *humble* themselves (1 Pet 5:5). Like Zipporah did.

Just think sisters, your humility could be used by God to save someone's life, both their physical and more importantly, their eternal.

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him...Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him."

~ 2 Chronicles 16:9, Isaiah 30:18



Ruth

Read: The Book of Ruth

A biblically submissive wife sows: HUMILITY

Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth makes a declaration of saving faith. These words of hers are not emotion-led, circumstantial, or temporal words. She does not make this statement of trust in the God of Israel to merely feel better or hope for a better life here on earth. Sometime during her marriage to one of Naomi's sons, while living under his roof, she came to hear, love and believe in the one true God.

Ruth 2:2

Ruth didn't sit around feeling sorry for herself (which she could've easily done, especially in her situation, i.e., lost her husband, moved to a foreign country, doesn't know anyone and lives with a bitter and depressed ex-mother-in-law). Instead, she takes the initiative to humbly, respectfully and lovingly ask Naomi for permission to go find a demeaning job in order to feed and care for the both of them.

Ruth already begins to display her love, humility, kindness, wisdom and honor for others above herself, which are all attributes of a biblically submissive woman. Ruth doesn't have a "*Get out of my way! I'm in charge!*" attitude. No, instead she has a "*How can I help?*" attitude.

Although Ruth was in no way truly obligated to Naomi, she chose to commit herself to someone who was utterly of no use to her in any way. Think about it. If anything, at this moment in their lives, Naomi was "dead weight" more than she was a blessing. But because Ruth doesn't esteem herself, all her heart perceives is the destitute and sorrowful state of her mother-in-law; and compassion for Naomi overtakes her.

Our relationship with Christ is much the same. We are of no use to Him. If anything, we are only "dead weight" ...literally. We only brought Him sorrow and because of us, He chose to die for our sins, that we might live and become the righteousness of God through Him (2 Cor 5:21).

The Son of God, like Ruth, was overtaken by His great love and compassion for us in our helpless and frail state—providing us eternal salvation by His wounds (1 Pet 2:24).

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.' "

~ Matthew 9:36-38

In this world, there are *spectators* who merely *talk* about what should be done, what they *plan* to do, and point out error in others who may not be doing everything accurately, but at least their doing something more than just talking about it (1 Jn 3:18). And then there are the *laborers* who only talk when necessary because they are busy with the Lord's business, rather than ensnared with the world's business (2 Tim 2:4, 6).

God is gracious and He is sovereign. And in His kindness, once we are saved, He allows us to choose whether we will be chatty spectators or humble laborers. Ruth was most definitely a humble laborer who was mercifully welcomed into God's fold, although she was a Moabitess and not an Israelite.

It is easy for us to seek God's face when we are in need or distressed. Not only is this fact true historically in the Bible, but I've found it to be true in my life as well. Just like God's children of old, I too have cried out to God for deliverance and found it easy to be grateful when He provides refuge, comfort and grace in my time of need. But it seems that when we're doing well, when we're comfortable, we tend to forget the God who so generously provided us with His awesome presence and His glorious riches. We take God and His gifts for granted as if we somehow deserved or earned all the good we have.

It's not only during the difficult times our humility is tested, but also in the times of pleasantries.

"Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His rules and His statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God...Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' "

~ Deuteronomy 8:11-14(a) and 17
(emphasis mine)

Unlike many of us, Ruth didn't forget the God who gave her her husband, then took him away. Instead she desired to stay near Him and His people, even if it meant that she would live in poverty, with an embittered, depressed mother-in-law in a foreign land where she might be mistreated and rejected because she was not an Israelite.

She labored intensely in a field, gleaning as a beggar from what was left from the harvesters who had already reaped the best of the grain from the field. Except for a short and necessary rest, she did not stop until she had reaped an ample amount to bring home to her mother-in-law, so they may eat and live.

Even when she caught Boaz's eye, she did not consider herself worthy. When Boaz spoke kindly to her, she did not do a "Yay me!" dance (like I've done when people notice me), but fell to the ground in humility and wondered why such a man like Boaz would dare to even notice a poor, servant girl like her.

Ruth 4:14, 17

Ruth's love, trust and full devotion to the God of Israel, allowed her to receive a rich and glorious blessing she could never do anything to deserve; she became the great-grandmother of King David and ultimately was privileged to be included in the earthly lineage of Jesus Christ our Savior.

When we allow our pride to take over, we are choosing to step out of God's will—His protection and gracious blessings we could never dream of, earn or deserve. But when we humble ourselves, we willingly submit to God's authority and lovingly and joyfully obey His commandments (1 John 5:3).

The humility of a wife/mother tends to breed humility in those around her. Not because she boasts of this, but because the evidence of God's work is clearly manifested in her life as she daily decreases, so the life of Christ the Lord may increase in her (Jn 3:30, Gal 2:20).

For the perfect example of unnecessary honor and submissive obedience rendered, read Luke 2:48-52.



Elizabeth

Read: Luke 1:1-80

A biblically submissive wife exudes: FAITH

Although both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were found to be righteous before God and walked "blamelessly in all the statutes of the Lord", Zechariah began to lose faith that God would ever grant them a child. This fact is evidenced by his response of brash unbelief when the angel of the Lord Gabriel spoke to him about the birth of John. Because Zechariah was hasty to utter anything before God (Ecclesiastes 5:2), Gabriel closes Zechariah's mouth of unbelief until it was time to name John (nearly an entire year).

When it was time to name their son, the other priests had been aware that Zechariah could not speak, so they were going to name him after Zechariah. But Zechariah's biblically submissive wife Elizabeth humbly spoke up and said, "No; he shall be called John." In her time, it was not proper for a woman to speak up in such a manner, especially to publicly correct men. But she did not speak out of unsubmitiveness and pride; she spoke only that which God had given her beforehand.

Elizabeth's faith exuded from her every being. She immediately accepted God's blessing of a baby when it seemed impossible; she prophesied when Mary came to see her in her six month; and when she spoke, she spoke with wisdom and the teaching of kindness was on her tongue (Prov 31:26).

Her faith built up her husband's faith, and his speech was restored when he humbly agreed with the words from his wife, because he now saw, that truly, all that Gabriel spoke to him *was* from the Almighty.

Was it Elizabeth's words from much study and eloquence in which she expressed herself, or her knowledge of spiritual matters that restored her husband's faith? No. It was by her good conduct that proved the work of her faith in the meekness of wisdom (James 3:13).

In this lesson, we were blessed to visit with three sisters of old, who exemplified what biblical submission looks like in very different situations. We saw that a biblically submissive wife protects life, sows humility and exudes faith. We also saw that these godly attributes were God-given gifts to each woman so that through her biblical submission, generations after her would be blessed.

Biblical Perspective, Practically Applied:

1. Memorize, study and meditate on: Proverbs 31:23, Job 41:11 and Ephesians 2:10.
2. Don't rush through this lesson. There is a lot of Scripture to cover and it will not benefit you to merely skim through it. Meditate deeply on each Scripture/passage and write the Scripture/passage in which God quickens your heart to obedience and write everything the Lord reveals to you in your journal.
3. In your journal create a three column list. Title the first column *"God's Gifts to Me"*, the second column *"My Gifts to God"* and the third column, *"What I Provided On My Own"*. In accordance with Psalm 9:1-2, recount your entire life and list everything you have (your family members, your home, jobs, friends, your bed, a plate, stick of gum, etc.) and put them under one of these lists.

After your list is complete, write the letter "N" for Need, "W" for Want and "E" for Excess. Then search God's Word and write the Scripture(s) next to each item in accordance with what God says about each thing.

Review and share your list and Scriptures with your husband and if he agrees, with your discipler and/or your accountability/study group.