

Seasons of Life
“Full-term Faith”

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One of my favorite quotes on Motherhood comes from Elizabeth Stone and she says this:

Making the decision to have a child – it’s momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside of your body.

So since it is Mother’s Day I thought I would share with you my heart.

(Show Pics of kids)

Today we are going to take a look at a couple of other mothers in the Bible.

The first one is found in the book of Luke the first chapter Pg__

We are going to look at a couple of mothers today to learn how real women of faith live their lives.

As I study real women of faith – those in the Bible and those who have impacted my own life personally, I find they all share five things in common.

Five things that not only women of faith share but all persons of faith, men or women, share.

So let’s take a look first at the mother of our Lord and Savior – Jesus.

Luke 1:38 says this:

“Mary responded, ‘ I am the Lord’s servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true... ’”

So how did Mary come to have faith, a strong, faith that says *I am willing to accept whatever* because I know that the Lord is in it.

Well it wasn’t because Mary had a problem free life.

The first thing women of faith share in common is:

1. Women of faith exhibit real problems!

It’s easy to think that the heroes in the Bible were somehow different than we are.

We might think that it’s tough to relate to them because their lives were so perfect and their culture was so different than ours.

Actually, the Bible is filled with real people with real problems, who face them with real faith.

Look at Luke 1:31-34

Sounds like a pretty real problem to me.

She has never been with a man but she is going to have a baby.

Mary is engaged to be married to Joseph and this angel tells her she is going to become pregnant and apparently not by Joseph.

In Mary's culture at that time this meant she could be thrown out of her parent's house to live on the streets with no means to make a living.

Joseph could have insisted she be stoned to death and he would have had every right to do so.

Mary would be shunned by everyone and considered a loose woman so she may have had to turn to prostitution to make a living for her and her child.

She was definitely going to be talked about in her community.

And that isn't even touching on what will happen when she says it is the Messiah she is pregnant with.

Yes I do believe Mary exhibited real problems.

And did you notice that Mary **agrees to accept whatever the Lord wants** even though the angel didn't tell her how these problems were going to be solved or even if they would be solved.

How about you – have you ever had a real problem? Ever wondered how you would get through your problem? Ever looked at a problem and just not been able to see a solution of any kind?

What have you done with that?

What Mary did with it is another thing women of faith, people of faith share in common.

2. Women of faith experience God's provision!

The first thing Mary does is go running off to see her Aunt and Uncle.

And the first thing her Aunt Elizabeth does is confirm what the angel said and affirm that Mary is blessed above all women.

Listen to Luke again – Luke 1:39-45.

Mary began to experience how God would provide for her right away.

She went to an older woman of faith in order to work through this problem and this woman of faith gave Mary encouragement on her journey didn't she.

Now it doesn't tell us much about Mary and Elizabeth's relationship in the Bible.

But this passage does give us a glimpse into what it must have been like.

If the first person Mary wanted to see after she finds out she is pregnant is her Aunt – she must have felt she could be honest with her Aunt, she could trust her Aunt, she could receive love and encouragement from her Aunt.

And so off she runs to Elizabeth. Did you notice that - in the very first few words of verse 39 – *A few days later Mary hurried off!*

A few days later Mary must have thought – I couldn't have heard that angel correctly, maybe I dreamed it all, I mean how many people really see angels?

You have felt this way too before – I know I have.

She couldn't have possibly just told me she is pregnant again – we can't afford the kids we already have. Lord she must be wrong.

He couldn't possibly have said that he just got laid off – he has worked there for 26 years – Lord what are we going to do?

God couldn't possibly be calling me to go to Tanzania – Lord do you know that is clear over in Africa?

Sometimes we face unbelievable problems because the Lord wants to show us exactly how miraculously he can and will provide.

But first He wants us to trust like Mary and say *I am willing to accept whatever he wants.*

That kind of trust and faith is hard – believe me I know.

That kind of faith calls us to seek out others of faith to help us through, it calls us to trust in things we cannot see yet, it calls us to our knees doesn't it.

You see the third thing people of faith have in common is:

3. Women of faith express vibrant prayers!

Psalm 119:71 says: "The suffering you sent was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your principles."

Our problems should drive us to prayer.

Another great woman of faith in the Bible is Hannah the mother of Samuel. Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah and was unable to have a child. After several years of this, she went to the temple to pray to the Lord.

I Samuel says it this way, as Hannah is speaking to the Lord: "...I was pouring out my heart to the Lord...I have been praying.." I Samuel 1:15-16

I'll let you read the whole story in I Samuel 1 and 2 - but basically what happens is that Hannah is crying and pouring out her heart to the Lord. She promises God that if he will give her a son, she will give him back to the Lord to serve the Lord for all of his life.

Now she didn't know that God would answer her prayer with a child, but she trusted and *was willing to accept whatever the Lord wanted*, just like Mary. What Hannah did know, however, was the power of prayer.

Never underestimate the power of a praying woman.

Susannah Wesley spent one hour each day praying for her 17 children. In addition, she took each child aside for a full hour each week to discuss spiritual matters. It's no wonder that two of her sons, Charles and John, were used mightily in both England and America.

What Prayer Warrior prayed for you, who are you praying vibrant prayers for, not just prayers but heartfelt, soul rendering prayers for?

My mother, who was a great woman of faith, prayed for my brothers, my sister and myself right up until God took her home.

I have prayed for each of my children while they were still in my belly. And I have not ceased to pray for them nor will I until I draw my last breath. You see I know God has a plan and a purpose for each of their lives, a hope and a future for them.

And I want them to experience all that God has in store for them. After all, they are my heart, so I pray and pray and pray and pray!

4. Women of faith excel at keeping their promises!

God did grant Hannah's prayer for a child.

He doesn't always do that but he did for Hannah.

And Hannah keeps her promise to the Lord.

"I asked the Lord to give me this child, and he has given me my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord." I Samuel 1:27-28

Hannah had promised God that if he gave her a child, she would give him back. So when Samuel is three years old, Hannah takes him to the temple and gives him to the priest Eli, to assist Eli in serving the Lord.

Imagine how hard that must have been – after wanting a child for so long and then to leave him at the temple.

What Hannah knew in her heart is that Samuel really belonged to the Lord anyway.

And Hannah had made a promise to God and women of faith excel at keeping their promises.

What trust and faith Hannah must have had in her relationship with God. One of the lessons of faith that we can learn from the life of Hannah is that each of us needs to be growing in our own relationship with God.

If you want your children to learn about God, and to love Him with all they've got, it's first got to be real in your own life, as it was for Hannah.

If you want your kids brought up in a Christian home, you need to make sure that Christ is at home in your heart.

If He is, then you can spend the rest of your life giving your children back to the Lord, they belong to Him anyway.

Lastly,

5. Women of faith explode with praise!

Let's come back to Luke for a moment and look at verse 46. Read 46-56

After Elizabeth had encouraged Mary, Mary explodes in a song of praise for her Lord.

Throughout scripture you will find men and women of faith exploding in praise at how the Lord blesses and watches over them, at how the Lord provides in the midst of real problems, at how the Lord keeps his promises to them, at how God loves them.

And it is no different today.

God blesses, provides, is faithful, and loves each of his children, each of us. There have been times in my life when I have so clearly seen the hand of God move in my life, that I just want to shout from the rooftops of how awesome he is.

Today I have asked 2 women of faith to come forward and share with you how they have become these women of faith and how God has moved in their lives.

Please welcome with me: Melissa Hussong and Ruth Bowers.

Jackie Crane and Suzanne Collins

We all need women and men of faith to help us on our faith journeys...women need other women, men need other men and we all need each other....

to encourage us, to show us how to survive in the midst of real problems, to assure us that God does provide because they have experienced it, to lead us to our knees in prayer, to help us excel at keeping our promises because they have kept their promises and to share with us as we explode in praises to God the parent of us all.

We need these persons of faith and we need to be these persons of faith for others.

ON this Mother's Day, I wish I had the time to go through and personally thank each of you wonderful women of faith for the ways in which you have enriched my life but I don'tso let me close by reading this:

Praise to the Women on My Journey

To the women on my journey

*Who showed me the ways to go and the ways to not go,
Whose strength and compassion held up a torch of light and beckoned me to follow,
Whose weakness and ignorance darkened the path and encouraged me to turn another way.*

To the women on my journey

*Who showed me how to live and how not to live,
Whose grace, success and gratitude lifted me into the fullness of surrender to God,
Whose bitterness, envy and wasted gifts warned me away from the emptiness of self-will.*

To the women on my journey

*Who showed me what I am and what I am not,
Whose love, encouragement and confidence held me tenderly and nudged me gently,
Whose judgment, disappointment and lack of faith called me to deeper levels of commitment and resolve.*

*To the women on my journey who taught me love by means of both darkness and light,
To these women I say bless you and thank you from the depths of my heart, for I have been healed and set free through your joy and through your sacrifice.*

Rev. Melissa M. Bowers

And to my mother who was the greatest woman of faith I have ever known
God bless you all!!!