

He Knows My Name

THE GARDEN COLLECTION

Student Guide

Study Week 2

Women in the household and the unfolding story of God

This guide begins with the social world of biblical households, then follows Noah's wife and daughters-in-law, Sarah, Hagar, and Rebekah. Brief readings connect their stories with Milcah and Lot's wife.

We will notice the work women carried, the choices available to them, and the ways God meets people within difficult circumstances. A woman's dignity does not depend on her marital status, motherhood, age, or productivity. We begin with women and men made in God's image (Genesis 1:27).

How to use this guide Bring your Bible. Read the listed passage before discussing a woman's story. Choose one or two reflection questions during our gathering; the others can become personal reflection. We can continue wherever our conversation leaves off.

Name _____

Gathering date _____

Three women at a glance

THE GARDEN COLLECTION

HE KNOWS MY NAME

Sarah • Hagar • Rebekah



SARAH

The Promise in the Waiting
Genesis 12-23

- 1 Meet Her:** Abraham's wife and Isaac's mother.
- 2 Her World:** Tents, kinship, and hospitality.
- 3 Her Struggle:** Waiting, fear, and painful choices.
- 4 Her Encounter with God:** God fulfills His promise through Isaac.
- 5 Reflect:** How can I wait without trying to control?



HAGAR

Seen in the Wilderness
Genesis 16; 21:8-21

- 1 Meet Her:** An enslaved Egyptian woman and Ishmael's mother.
- 2 Her World:** Unequal household power.
- 3 Her Struggle:** Mistreatment, isolation, and fear.
- 4 Her Encounter with God:** God's messenger calls her by name; she names the Lord *El Roi*.
- 5 Reflect:** Whose suffering have I overlooked?



REBEKAH

A Yes at the Well
Genesis 24-27

- 1 Meet Her:** Bethuel's daughter and Milcah's granddaughter.
- 2 Her World:** Water carrying, hospitality, and marriage.
- 3 Her Struggle:** Favoritism and deception divide her family.
- 4 Her Encounter with God:** She seeks the Lord and receives an answer.
- 5 Reflect:** How can I act without manipulating others?

The Citrus Alliance for the Arts
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Materials belong to Shirley Draper and The Citrus Alliance for the Arts.

These illustrated summaries introduce the women. Read their stories in context as we explore the lessons together.

Bread Power and the Ancient Household

Read Genesis 18:1-8; 41:51; 46:31; Numbers 30:1-16

Bread making may feel like a hobby to a modern reader. In an ancient farming household, preparing staple food was essential work. Grain had to be processed, ground, mixed, and baked. These tasks required strength, practiced judgment, time, and knowledge of tools and ovens.

The women who organized food preparation helped sustain daily life. Their work could involve decisions about grain, fuel, storage, labor, and the use of household resources.

The father's household The Hebrew expression *bet 'av*, also written *bet 'ab*, means “father's household.” It could include several generations, married sons and their wives, unmarried relatives, and enslaved people. Family identity, land, food, and work were closely connected.

Authority was not the whole story Men commonly held greater formal authority, but women's opportunities and influence varied with status and circumstances. Numbers 30 concerns particular vows made by daughters and wives; it does not describe every household decision. It also treats widows and divorced women differently.

Inheritance and responsibility Deuteronomy 21:15-17 gives the firstborn son a double inheritance share. That law should not be turned into a rule that every eldest son automatically controlled every household. Biblical families also show disputes and exceptions.

1. What changes when we understand bread making as skilled work essential to survival?

My notes

Noah's Wife and Daughters in Law

Read Genesis 6:5-22; 7:7-16; 8:15-19; 9-10

Meet Her Noah's wife and the wives of Shem, Ham, and Japheth are the four women who enter the ark. Genesis does not give their names.

Her World The story takes place before Israel existed as a nation. Later Israelite household research can suggest questions about family work, but cannot establish these women's exact customs or duties.

Her Story The women enter with the household, live through the flood, and emerge into a changed world. Genesis 10 traces the nations descended from Noah's sons.

What We Often Miss The narrative includes the women even though it preserves no speech from them. An unnamed woman is still part of the story.

Her Struggle Leaving a familiar world and facing long confinement would raise questions about uncertainty and loss. Genesis does not describe each woman's feelings.

Her Encounter with God God's instructions include the wives in the household's preservation. Their personal conversations with God are not recorded.

What God Reveals We can reflect on God's care for a household without inventing names, speeches, or experiences for its women.

Questions for Reflection What does the text tell us about these women? What does it leave unsaid?

Faith in Action Notice a person whose necessary work is easily overlooked.

This Week's Challenge Thank someone for a specific act of care or preparation.

My notes

Questions About the Ark

Read Genesis 5-7; 9:28-29; Numbers 13:33

Open your Bible and discover the answers together.

- 1.** Why did God decide to judge the world? What grieved Him? Read Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13.
- 2.** How is Noah described? What made his relationship with God different? Read Genesis 6:8-9.
- 3.** What do Genesis 6:1-4 and Numbers 13:33 say about the Nephilim? What questions do these verses raise?
- 4.** How long did Adam, Methuselah, and Noah live? Read Genesis 5:5, 27; 9:28-29.
- 5.** What does God say about 120 years? What does the verse leave unexplained? Read Genesis 6:3.
- 6.** How old was Noah when his sons were born and when the flood came? Do these verses give an exact building time? Read Genesis 5:32; 7:6.
- 7.** What materials and dimensions did God specify for the ark? Read Genesis 6:14-15.
- 8.** What instructions did God give for its roof, door, and decks? Read Genesis 6:16.
- 9.** Who was to enter the ark with Noah? Where are his wife and daughters-in-law included? Read Genesis 6:18; 7:7.
- 10.** How did Noah respond to God's instructions? What might obedience require of us while we wait? Read Genesis 6:22; 7:5.

My notes

Provision Waiting and a New Beginning

Read Genesis 6:19-21; 7:2-16; 8:1-22; 9:8-17

Open your Bible and discover the answers together.

- 1.** How many animals were to enter the ark? Compare Genesis 6:19-20 with 7:2-3. What distinction do you notice?
- 2.** Which animals did Noah offer after the flood? How might this connect with the numbers? Read Genesis 8:20.
- 3.** What does Scripture say about the animals coming to Noah? Read Genesis 6:20; 7:9, 15-16.
- 4.** What food preparations did God command? What work might the women have shared? Read Genesis 6:21.
- 5.** How long did the rain fall? Compare the dates when the flood began and the family left the ark. Read Genesis 7:11-12; 8:13-19.
- 6.** What promise did God make, whom did it include, and what was its sign? Read Genesis 9:8-17.
- 7.** What can this family's experience teach us about preparing faithfully and trusting God while we wait?

My notes

Women Along the Family Line

Read Genesis 11:27-32; 19:15-29; 22:20-23; 24:15; Luke 17:28-33

Milcah and the generations Milcah is Nahor's wife; Nahor is Abraham's brother. Genesis 22 lists her children, including Bethuel. Genesis 24 identifies Rebekah as Bethuel's daughter and Milcah's granddaughter. Her place in the family line helps us understand the later marriage story.

What we know and do not know Genesis tells us little about Milcah's personal experiences. We can trace her relationships without inventing her thoughts, conversations, or spiritual encounters. A brief mention can still connect important parts of the story.

Lot's wife and looking back Lot's wife is unnamed in Genesis. During the urgent escape from Sodom, the family is instructed not to look back. She looks back and becomes a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:17, 26). The passage does not explain her motive.

Read the warning carefully Jesus refers to her in a warning about the coming day and the attempt to preserve one's life (Luke 17:28-33). We can examine attachment, trust, and response without claiming to know every feeling behind her action.

1. What does Milcah's brief appearance teach us about following family connections in Scripture?
2. What can we learn from Lot's wife without inventing a motive the text does not state?

As we continue Notice which women are named, which are unnamed, and how each is connected to the surrounding story.

My notes

Sarah

Read Genesis 12:10-20; 16; 17:15-21; 18:1-15; 20; 21:1-7

Meet Her Sarah, first called Sarai, journeys with Abraham and becomes Isaac's mother. God changes her name in Genesis 17:15.

Her World Kinship, hospitality, migration, and the expectation of descendants shape her household life.

Her Story Abraham twice denied being Sarah's husband to protect himself when a powerful ruler noticed her beauty and wanted her for himself (Genesis 12:10-20; 20). God repeatedly makes clear that Sarah will be a key player: she will be "a mother of nations; kings of people shall come from her" (Genesis 17:16).

What We Often Miss Sarah is named in the promise. She also mistreats Hagar; recognizing Sarah's significance must not hide the harm Hagar experiences.

Her Struggle Fear and uncertainty lead to attempts to secure the future. Household power allows her decisions to affect someone with less freedom.

Her Encounter with God The Lord questions her laughter and affirms His promise. Isaac's birth follows at the appointed time (Genesis 18:9-15; 21:1-7).

What God Reveals The promise rests on God's faithfulness. Its fulfillment does not make every human action in the story right.

Questions for Reflection What am I trying to control? How might my choices affect someone with less power?

Faith in Action Practice patience without placing the cost of your anxiety on another person.

This Week's Challenge Choose one responsibility to carry faithfully and one outcome to entrust to God.

My notes

Hagar

Read Genesis 16; 21:8-21

Meet Her Hagar is an enslaved Egyptian woman in Abram and Sarai's household and the mother of Ishmael.

Her World Her status leaves her vulnerable to decisions made by others about her body, labor, and future.

Her Story She flees mistreatment in Genesis 16. Later, she and Ishmael are sent away and face a crisis in the wilderness in Genesis 21.

What We Often Miss These are two distinct wilderness scenes. The messenger addresses Hagar by name in the first; God hears the boy and provides water in the second.

Her Struggle She faces mistreatment, isolation, uncertainty, and fear for her child's survival.

Her Encounter with God God's messenger finds her near a spring. She names the Lord El Roi, commonly understood as the God who sees her (Genesis 16:7-14).

What God Reveals Hagar receives divine attention and a promise concerning her descendants. Her social vulnerability does not make her invisible to God.

Questions for Reflection What does God's attention to Hagar reveal? Whose suffering am I overlooking?

Faith in Action Listen carefully to someone whose voice is easily dismissed.

This Week's Challenge Offer one practical act of care that respects the other person's choices and dignity.

My notes

Rebekah

Read Genesis 24:15-28, 57-67; 25:19-28; 27:1-45

Meet Her Rebekah is Bethuel's daughter and Milcah's granddaughter. She becomes Isaac's wife.

Her World Water carrying, hospitality, family ties, and marriage negotiations shape her daily world.

Her Story She generously waters the servant's camels, agrees to leave her family, marries Isaac, and later becomes the mother of Esau and Jacob.

What We Often Miss Her family asks whether she will go, and her response is recorded. Later she seeks the Lord about her difficult pregnancy (Genesis 24:57-58; 25:22-23).

Her Struggle Parental favoritism divides the family. Rebekah helps Jacob deceive Isaac to obtain the blessing.

Her Encounter with God The Lord answers her inquiry about the children she carries. That answer does not explicitly instruct her later deception.

What God Reveals Her story holds together initiative, prayer, promise, and the consequences of harmful choices.

Questions for Reflection Where can I take faithful initiative? How can I act without manipulating another person?

Faith in Action Serve generously while respecting another person's freedom to respond.

This Week's Challenge Examine one relationship for favoritism and choose a fair, honest response.

My notes

Carry the Story Into Your Week

Some women in these readings speak boldly. Others are unnamed. Their circumstances differ, and their choices are not always wise. We will keep asking what the text reveals about their world, their responses, and God's character.

1. Which woman or household story stayed with you, and why?
2. What did you learn to distinguish between a biblical statement, a historical possibility, and an interpretation?

A small step of faith Choose one passage to reread slowly. Notice one detail you missed, one question to bring back, and one response you can put into practice. You do not need to complete every question to participate in our next gathering.

Scripture to revisit Genesis 1:27; 5-10; 11:27-32; 12-23; 24-27. Additional household and women's-role passages: Numbers 27:1-11; 30:1-16; Deuteronomy 21:15-17; Judges 4:4-5; Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42; 17:28-33; Acts 16:14-15; 18:26; Romans 16:1-2.

My notes
