

CARU

**HOLY SPIRIT**

*Week*

**January 11–18, 2020**

*Women*  
of **SPIRIT**



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- ◆ 25 SITES
- ◆ 25 PREACHERS
- ◆ Seven Conventions
- ◆ Concerts & Celebration
- ◆ 500 Baptisms

**Please pray for all the activities of this impact.**

**March 06 to 14, 2020**

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# A Message From the Union President



Dear Brothers and Sisters:

It is with joy that I greet you in the name of Jesus at the time of the "Holy Spirit Week". This one will be different because those who prepared these powerful messages are some of the leading female church leaders of the Caribbean Union Conference; hence the theme "Women of Spirit".

I am buoyed by the promise of the prophet Joel who said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28). It is timely that these sisters can fulfill this promise as they declare with power the precious word of God. January 11 to 18, 2020 will be remembered for a long time because of the impact that these pertinent presentations will have in the lives of members and visitors alike.

They will be focusing on the lives of some of the significant women of the Bible and drawing important lessons that will help us to cope in these challenging times. Some of the Bible characters that will be highlighted are Sarah, Abigail, Deborah, Elizabeth, and Mary.

May it be said of all of us as was said about another Mary, that she "has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42, NIV).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kern Tobias". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Kern Tobias

**PRESIDENT**





First Sabbath

## Sarah – Proof of God’s Powerful Promise

**Pastor Ruslyn Farfan**

*Women and Children's' Ministries Director  
South Caribbean Conference of SDA*

### **Scripture Text: Genesis 18: 9-15 (NASB)**

*“Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.”*

*He said, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.*

*Now Abraham and Sarah was old, advance in age; Sarah was pass childbearing age.*

*Sarah laugh to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”*

*And the Lord said to Abraham, “why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’*

*“Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son”*

*Sarah denied it, however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And he said, “No, but you did laugh.”*

It was the right time! The time had come, and Sarah, the Spirit-filled woman of God was about to have an encounter with heavenly beings. The promise was about to materialize, and preparations had begun for the grand fulfillment.

The Holy Spirit was present with Abraham and Sarah, as He would have been in time past. Abraham had always been a faithful friend of God, and loved to spend time in His presence. Hence, Abraham recognized the presence of God and the heavenly beings, and welcomed them to his tent for a

meal. The visit took place at midday or “Tsoharim” (Genesis 43:16) which refers to “the time of double or greatest light.”

Truly, it was a time of double light for Abraham and Sarah; for not only did they have the presence of God with them, but those heavenly beings brought with them the ray of light that would brighten the lives of this couple who no longer thought about the possibilities of the satisfaction of a prodigious promise.

The light of God had shone luminously. The presence of the Holy Spirit was contemporary, when immediately the messengers asked. “Where is Sarah your wife?” They spoke to Abraham of the promised child while Sarah listened. This visit was for the purpose of making known the fulfillment of the promise.

### **The History**

Genesis chapter 11 tells the story of Terah, the father of Abraham who had left his home country of Ur in Babylonia, because he had intended to settle in Canaan. Terah had taken along with him, Abraham, his son, Sarah his daughter in law, and Lot his grandson. However, when they reached Haran they settled for a while. There Terah died at the age of 205 years. It was at Haran that God said to Abraham, “You must leave your father’s family and go to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation.”

According to the Cambridge dictionary, the word promise means to tell someone that you will certainly do something. God told Abraham that He will give him a son and make him a great nation. God always keeps His promises. (2 Peter 3:9).

There are three areas that we will focus on to show the power of God.

1. **God can use Barren vessels**
2. **We should recognize our weak points**
3. **Laughter is coming – for joy – in disbelief**

#### **God can use barren vessels**

Sarah whose name means “lady, princess, noblewoman” according to (Behind the Name) appeared to be a stunning woman, easily noticed for her beauty and poise. It was no wonder Abraham thought his life was in danger by the Egyptians because of her magnificence (Genesis 20: 1-11).

Clearly Sarah’s inside matched her outer beauty. Sarah was faithful to her God and to her husband. Her husband loved her, and the presence of the Holy Spirit with her sealed that love. Sarah’s infertility was not a concern of Abraham, because he was a man of God and cherished the inward beauty of his wife. Abraham was moved by the Spirit of God. He was determined to do the will of God. His vow to Sarah was a vow of love, sealed with the love of God.

### **God always keeps His promises**

Barren according to the Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, identifies the word as ‘aridity, impoverishment or sterility. This definition amplifies the circumstance in which God was working. A condition that only He could fix.

According to the medical world today, it would be nearly impossible for a woman at ninety to become

pregnant after she was no longer menstruating, for probably more than forty years, is such a long time.

But our God is an awesome God! Is there anything too hard for our God to do?

Our God had made a covenant with Sarah thirty-seven years earlier, before they had left Haran, “Sarah would have a son.” God’s full power was about to be manifested. Impossible was about to become possible.

Both Abraham and Sarah still had not understood the fulfillment of God’s promise. However, they were going to find out the extent of the powerful God of the universe. That there really is not “anything too hard for the Lord to do.”

The Holy Spirit was present in the life of this woman of God at ninety (90) years old. She was used to being childless, but that was about to change. God waited thirty-seven years to fulfill His promise and His word never returns unto him void. (2 Peter 3:9)

Compare the barrenness of Sarah to the barrenness of death.

God shows up at the best time, He is never late! Yea! It was Martha who said to Jesus in John 11: 21-22, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.”

Lazarus was dead for four days. He was a vessel that could no longer be used. Sarah’s womb was dead for more than forty years, but Jesus waited, until the time was right He restored life to a dead barren body, a body that could no longer produce!

**The Holy Spirit was present in the life of this woman of God at ninety (90) years old. She was used to being childless, but that was about to change.**

He restored life to a lifeless womb. He waited until it was no longer possible with man! He waited to show God's glory!

Our service, our worship should always be about glorifying God, for His name's sake. Is there anything too hard for the Lord to do? The answer is still no! Isa 48:11; Act 17:25.

### **Recognizing your weak points**

Like Sarah many of us give up too early and lose out on all the blessings God has in store for us. The story is told of a young man, who like many other young men, left the church in search of love and fulfilment in society's standard of living. The young women of the church didn't interest him, for there were many faults he could find with them. He was sure that God had left a command for him to be fruitful and multiply. He had forgotten the part of the scripture that said be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, (2 Corinthians 6:14) and also to allow the Holy Spirit to guide his choosing. This young man just could not wait. He soon encountered a woman whom he thought was the one, for like Sampson he thought "she pleases me well" (Judges 14:3). He thought he would do the popular thing and just have a child together but not get married.

The baby was a charming little boy called Adam, whom everyone loved and 'spoiled rotten'. Before long the young man began thinking about coming back to church because he recognized negative behavior traits in Adam. He thought if he brought him to Sabbath school he would be different. But Adam's mother would have none of it and his father was not strong enough to stand up. How could he convince her? After all he did leave and was not a true witness to his faith!

Time passed and Adam represented the values he grew up with, no spiritual influence. It was not long before Adam's mother emigrated leaving this teenager with her relatives, who were unable to instruct

**Our service, our worship should always be about glorifying God, for His name sake.**

him. He was placed into his father's care. This was his father's chance to make a difference he imagined. However, it was too late, and no instruction seemed work. Adam was out of control and sadly did not have Jesus as an option, because he was not introduced to Him formally. Unfortunately Adam's father had not waited on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and he had many challenges that could have been avoided.

Our lives are filled with many choices every day. Due to anxiety we make certain choices and as a result of the choices we make, we begin to look for solutions, sometimes giving up too soon and we lose out on the blessings.

### **This was Sarah's experience.**

The promise was made and perhaps Abraham and Sarah, had gotten used to the fact that having children was out of the question for them. Maybe they took comfort in the fact that all the servants born in their home belonged to them. However, God had promised that he would make them a great nation. The question was, how would God do this? By what means?

Sarah waited and waited for twenty five years, for the promise, hoping and expecting each month, that that would be the month. .

Sarah knew this seed must come from the loins of Abraham but surely you too would begin to reason within yourself. “Maybe I did not understand fully what God was saying, or clearly it would not be through me, being this old.” “Nonetheless God made a promise to me,” she thought. “We cannot afford to miss out on that blessing. After all this world would be blessed through us.”

Sarah and Abraham clearly over looked the sacredness of the marriage vow according to God’s expectation, (Genesis 2:24). “And they two shall be one flesh.” Since the people around the time in which they lived practiced polygamy it became typical to them as well. Later Sarah came up with a plan to realize this promise.

Today we may say Abraham and Sarah contracted Hagar to be the surrogate mother of God’s promise.

This plan was for Abraham to take Hagar the maid and have that child with her. They might have taunted her barrenness and now she was told, “You will bring forth the child,” in fulfillment of the covenant. Sarah herself could hardly believe that the promise was still possible. She thought Ishmael, Hagar’s son, had fulfilled that promise. Then, ‘Sarah laughed.’ She might have thought, “Could it be? I, the mother of a great promised nation?”

The story is told of Enoch, age nine, Silver eight, Sweet-sweet who was six and Little-little age five, who lived in Burma. These four young children loved to play around the yard of their home together. One day Enoch got a grand idea to go into the forest to play hide and seek. His sisters also thought it was a great idea, so off they went. On entering

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the forest, Enoch saw a huge tree with a hole in its trunk that a bird had fluttered into. He immediately said to his sisters, ‘Be very quiet, I am going to catch that bird.’ He walked slowly towards the tree and covered the hole with his hand-kerchief, then yelled for his sisters to come help him, but the bird had gotten away. However in the hole of the tree, there were four baby birds almost ready to fly. Each child took one birdie out and carried them home to show mother their find, and announced that they were going back to the forest later that night to catch the mother of the birds. The children’s mother warned them that they should avoid the forest at night, because wild animals came out at night. Still off they went. As they neared the tree again Enoch took out his hand-kerchief, covered the hole of the tree and yelled for his sisters to come and help him. While he blocked the hole, Silver put her hand into the hole to catch the birds’ mother, but she was not in the hole. Silver felt something cold, wet and slimy and it bit her. It was a big black snake.

Silver screamed out loud and began crying. Enoch took his hand-kerchief and tied her arm tightly and twisted it with a stick, as they helped Silver home. Silver’s mother called for the nurse. “I know what to do she said, I have seen the doctor do it many times before. I will cut the finger where the snake bit to get the poison out.” Another neighbour heard the screams and came over to the house. On hearing what had happened the neighbour said, “I know what to do. Take a piece of burning wood and burn the finger.” It was healed. Now Silver carries the scars to remind her of that adventure.



Good intentions, as good as they may seem, without the Holy Spirit's guidance, can only lead to turmoil and cause much pain and discomfort, especially to those immediately involved.

When we operate without the Holy Spirit we will always run into problems.

We go through much pain and hurt before healing comes.

**Thank God healing is available. For with God nothing is impossible!**

Thank God healing is available. For with God nothing is impossible!

Sarah's choice brought about such pain and sadness in her home for thirteen years. Even after the birth of Ishmael God repeated His promise again to Abraham.

Sarah, a noble woman, was considered to be the matriarch of the Jewish nation. Deciding to wait does not come without challenges and Sarah's choice proved to be challenging for their family. The book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, on the chapter *The Test of Faith*, shared that. "Abraham's marriage to Hagar resulted in evil, not only to his household, but to future generations." Sarah was challenged in her own home and had to fight to regain the respect that was due her.

### **Laughter is coming**

In life there are many instances of sadness before laughter. Sarah learnt the hard way. She had to endure the pain of her doubting actions. However, there did come a time for rejoicing through the power of God. Laughter came.

The Christian should always surrender daily to the Holy Spirit. Spending time in the word develops spiritual strength. Praying for an out pouring of the Holy Spirit daily, we will experience laughter.

Waiting on the Lord can take such energy and tolerance to endure. Integrity and obedience are tested. Patience is stretched but we are encouraged to hold on, because joy is coming.

Today we are instructed to wait on the Lord, but sadly we do our own biddings.

Both Sarah and Abraham were ordinary everyday people like you and me, who had to make decisions of waiting or acting immediately. Ellen White in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* exclaims, "God has always tried His people in the furnace of afflictions. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character."

In every situation Jesus is with us, He sees the very hurts and trials that we experience and He knows exactly what we need to become the instruments that He can use to accomplish his purpose. It is through those trials, that we are disciplined to rely on Jesus.

Our choices largely depend on the relationship that we have with the Lord.

Mandy Hale had always wanted to be married and thought it was hard to wait. As a Christian she was instructed to allow God to do the choosing for her. However she had gotten to the place in her life that she thought God did not care. One day after she had read her devotion she prayed out loud and something in her broke and she started crying. All too vividly she remembered the many times she cried out to God for a family, children, traditions, people to grow old with, and a husband to hold her and tell her that everything would be all right.

Mandy cried remembering all the years of waiting, or enduring the space between "no longer" and "not yet" and reliving all the moments when she felt forgotten by the God who claimed to love her. She recalled the countless instances of frustration and impatience and even despair as the birthdays passed. Her situation seemingly grew more and more hopeless. She thought that she might never find the simplest and most complicated of life's blessings: someone to love her. And then, suddenly, in the silence of her warm home she heard a still small voice speaking words of comfort clearly and directly. She felt such reassurance of the Lord's love and goodness, of his protection and His care. Mandy recalls the moment as rare. She felt she had experienced a glimpse of the depth of his love for her. She describes the feeling of being calm and hopeful.



Mandy Hale experienced challenges that caused her much discomfort in making a decision to wait on the Lord. Her decision eventually paid off. She understood that even though she had not gotten yet what she had been praying for, she was assured by the Holy Spirit of God's presence with her. She was comfortable knowing that Jesus cared about every aspect of her life.

Mandy taught us that waiting, although it may not always be comfortable, it is worth it.

Hagar was given a place of wife which didn't belong to her, and caused pain for herself and her mistress. Sarah was forced to let Hagar go because of the tension in the home. Abraham failed to consult the Holy Spirit for guidance in the matter and contributed to the dysfunction in his family.

### **Conclusion**

God was merciful to Sarah and Abraham. However, because of their choices, they were faced with the consequences of their actions. - A son that was not promised, a servant who usurped the authority of her mistress.

Though God brought healing to the heart of Sarah and brought joy to the home again when Isaac was born, the scars remained.

God kept his promises. His words never fail. The true son had brought healing to the home and the land.

To the 'Sarahs', and the all the godly women, wait on the Lord and be of good cheer.

To all the 'Abrahams' and godly young men, be faithful to your calling. God is faithful, "There is nothing too hard for God!"



1. *East Caribbean Conference*
2. *Tobago Mission*
3. *All Master Guides*
4. *All Church Musicians*
5. *Praise Team/Song Service Leaders*

**"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference." - Max Lucado**



Sunday

## Abigail - A Fountain of Wisdom and Tact

**Pastor Carolyn Brandon**

*Women Children and Adolescent Ministries Director  
Guyana Conference of SDA*

### Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 25

#### Introduction

Concomitant to the times in which we live is a fervent need for, **“Women of Spirit”!** Compulsory, in these times in which we live is the necessity for women to be conduits of the Holy Spirit. Critical in these times is the commitment for women who will avail themselves to the appropriating of the Holy Spirit to their lives momentarily. Central to the times in which we live is the requisite for women who will share in the sentiments of **Daniel Iverson** in the Hymn, **“Spirit of the Living God”**, (Sing the Hymn). Continually, women need to give the Holy Spirit authorization, to break us, and melt us and mould us and fill us! We have been given ample assurance of what the Spirit will do in these last days and I am sure you will concur with me that the last days are upon us! When we look around us, when we read the news headlines, we can affirm that the last days of Earth’s history are evident! Apostle Peter preaching at his mega campaign gave a reminder: **“16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”** Handmaidens, the Spirit is available to God’s daughters. We can rehearse like the song writer, **“Baptize us Anew....”** (Sing Hymn).

**“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”** John 16:13. Ellen White asserts, **“There never was a time when more workers were needed than at the present. There are brethren and sisters throughout all our ranks who should discipline themselves to engage in this work; in all our churches something should be done to spread the truth. It is the duty of all to study the various points of our faith.”** — Review and Herald, April 1, 1880.

The reality of the availability of the wisdom conferred by the Holy Spirit to women is beautifully exemplified in the story of Abigale. This extraordinary woman was highly validated:

#### Defined by her beauty

Abigale was a natural beauty from Southern Judah. It was not just her external features that defined her beauty. She was not just attractive! Her character complimented her beauty. She possessed the enviable trait of “beauty and brain”. Even the selection of her name by her parents fashioned their desire for these amicable traits, for her name Abigail (many pronounce the name **A-vi-ga-yil**, and in Hebrew it is אַבִּיגַיִל is comprised of the two Hebrew words “avi” and “gil,” which translate respectively as **“father”** and **“happiness.”** Together, it translates as **“happiness or rejoicing of the father.”**

The narrative describes her as, “**a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance:**” Peter gave women an injunction, “**Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.** 4. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:3-4 New International Version). Solomon espoused similar counsel in Proverbs 31:30. “**Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.**” However, the ancient culture did not highly esteem women:

1. Women were bought and sold.
2. Women could not inherit property.
3. Women had arranged marriages.
4. Women were abducted.
5. Women were given as trophies.
6. Women were used as sex objects in idol worship.

As a result of her existing cultural context, this pretty woman was permissible to marrying a fool. “**Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.**” 1 Samuel 25: 3

What should be noted as well is that this fool did not only possess a beautiful and tactful wife, but his ancestry was of the household of “Caleb” which dissipates being “faithful, devoted, whole hearted, bold, brave.” This postulates the reality that one’s ancestry does not predetermine one’s destiny. One’s ancestry does not predetermine one’s capacity. One’s ancestry does not predetermine one’s integrity. Each of us needs to personally endeavor to attain godly wisdom through the working of the Holy Spirit. Nabal was rich with earthly possessions, but poor in character. The Bible narrates in 1 Samuel 25: 4 -11, how he treated David and his men while they were fugitives in Carmel. He treated them with disparagement and disrespect.

## Devoted to Duty

Abigail’s temperament bore complete contrast to that of her husband’s and in spite of his limitations, she was devoted to him. In fact, she risked her life to save him. The Bible posits, “She was a woman of good understanding.” She was a woman of tact. The servant of Nabal approached her as it pertained

to Nabal’s response to David’s request. This suggested that he thought highly of her tactfulness and wisdom.

<sup>14</sup> “ *One of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.*

<sup>15</sup> *But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:*

<sup>16</sup> *They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.*

<sup>17</sup> *Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.”*

He was confident that she would make the right judgement. He was assured that she would bring about recourse to her husband’s deadly determination. One can safely assert that many a times he would have seen her wisdom and tact brought to the fore. Recognizing the dilemma, she was propelled to decisive action. She wanted to save her family and their fortune.

## Denounced her husband’s depravity

Immediately, Abigale responded to her husband’s depravity. 18 **Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.**

**19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.**

In her wisdom, she pro-actively had her gifts precede her in an attempt to try to appease David. Like the wise King Solomon, she knew, “A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great” (Proverbs 18:16). She did not tell her husband, but she exchanged his:

1. Insensitivity with sympathy
2. Indignation with integrity
3. Hostility with hospitality
4. Ingratitude with charity
5. Voracity with sobriety
6. Selfishness with generosity
7. Stupidity with sensibility

She encountered David who rehashed what will befall her family. 21 **“Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that passeth against the wall.”**

The servant of the Lord affirms, “Abigail did not take to herself the credit of this reasoning to turn David from his hasty purpose, but gave to God the honor and the praise. She then offered her rich provision as a peace offering to the men of David, and still pleaded as if she herself were the one who had so excited the resentment of the chief. **Patriarchs and Prophets, 665, 666 (1890).**

### **Demonstrated true Loyalty**

#### **Loyalty to Nabal**

She dismounted her donkey, expressed great humility and displayed great loyalty by pleading with David for her husband and the rest of her family even at the cost of possibly being annihilated. She was prepared to become a martyr for an imprudent man, for an immoral man, for an indignant man, for an indecorous man. What demonstration of love! What a demonstration of loyalty! The Word of God records **“....Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be:”**

#### **Loyalty to David**

She then exercised further wisdom and tact in her discourse with David. Through the working and enabling of the Holy Spirit, she now counseled David. She knew who he was and requested to have audience with him. She told him that God has allowed for her intervention. She operated as peacemaker and advocate. She says to David:

- Nabal is embroiled in folly, but you are anointed as ruler over Israel (25, 30).
- Nabal is vile, but vengeance does not belong to you, “it is the Lord’s” (31).
- Nabal is thoughtless, but I beg you as God’s man for forgiveness (28).
- Nabal bears testimony of all your enemies (they are as foolish as he), but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the

Lord thy God (26).

- Nabal’s house is full of decadence, but you David, the “Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days (28).”

#### **Determined her Destiny**

Abigale perceptively administered her counsel to David. He acknowledged the wisdom in what she expressed. She brought resolution to the situation. When opportunities are afforded God’s people to help other deviate for deadly and devilish determinations, not only do they end up being a blessing, they too are blessed. Is there somebody who is blessed to be a blessings?

David then responded to her counsel by pronouncing blessings (1 Samuel 25:23-33):

- Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me.
- Blessed be thy advice.
- Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

David admonished Abigail to return to her house in peace. She returned home and again tactfully laid the matter to rest until morning, for her husband was drunk from his festivities in her absence. She waited in the morning to let him know of what almost befell him. He subsequently died as a result of fear. This serves to remind us that the battles and situations that confront us are not ours, but the Lord’s. It also proves that God ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts. God does His will, in His way and His time. **“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,”** Trust Him to fight your battles my friends!

**<sup>41</sup>“And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.**

**<sup>42</sup>And Abigail hasted, and arose and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.”**



Abigail's tact and wisdom changed her circumstances. She moved from being married to a fool to marrying a king. When we continue to keep alliances with Satan, it is like been married to a fool. I know that God in His plan of salvation and the working of the Holy Spirit has allowed for us to be married and stay married to the King of Kings. He will soon come to take His bride the church with Him. It is eminent my friends. Let every lamp be burning bright the darkest hour is nearing. Are you married to the King? Is there oil in your lamp? The Holy Spirit is available to fill every woman, every man, every boy and every girl. Do not be a fool but be wise. BE FILLED, BE WISE, BE A WOMAN OF SPIRIT.

## **Conclusion**

Abigale was certainly a woman of tact, tenacity and tremendous wisdom. She unquestionably reminds us that as long as the Holy Spirit takes full preeminence of our lives, God can do miraculous things. She was very cognizant of her need to intervene in order for her family to be saved. The opportunity is afforded us to be tactful and demonstrate wisdom in seeking to save our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. They may be like Nabal, illogical, irate, insensitive and ignorant to the reality of doom that looms if they continue in their drunken stupor of sin. He wants you to be an intermediary and with godly wisdom help someone to avail themselves of conviction, cleansing and conversion through the Holy Spirit.



1. *Guyana Conference*
2. *SUG Mission*
3. *Pastors*
4. *All Departmental Leaders*
5. *All Pathfinders*

"True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that - it is spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth." - Charles Spurgeon



Monday

## Deborah – A Spirit-filled Judge

**Pastor Deborah Spooner**

*District Pastor  
East Caribbean Conference of SDA*

**Scripture Text: Judges 4:4-7; Zechariah 4:6**

*Main Idea: Deborah - an instrument in the hand of God's Spirit for deliverance*

### **GOD'S PEOPLE OPPRESSED**

God's people were in trouble again. Their ruthless enemy, the Canaanites, headed by Sisera had oppressed the people of God for 20 years; inflicting pain, humiliation and defeat time and time again.

The cycle of sin and apostasy, suffering and disaster, repentance and return, is a familiar one in the book of Judges. The Children of Israel seemed locked into this pattern, and were powerless to extricate themselves from it. Judges 2:11-23 describes this painful cycle, which sets the theme and the foundation for what is to come. Yet, central to the Book of Judges is the presence of a loving and merciful God: a mighty Deliverer, a Conquering Warrior, an Empowering Force to be reckoned with when His people were being oppressed by their enemies; one who desires the best for His people and who works mightily by His Spirit to deliver them when they call upon Him.

Down through the ages I hear the voice of Isaiah, saying, "...when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him", "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of host." Notwithstanding His people's penchant for disobedience, God always responded to their cries of repentance, regret

and remorse. God always hears the plea of the penitent heart, God always stretches out His arm of deliverance to the soul pressed down by the consequences of sin.

The Bible indicates that once again the Children of Israel were enticed by the practices of the heathen nations around them, and had become entranced by the idol worship and pagan rituals. As a result, the Lord left them to the ravages of the enemy.

Judges 4:1 says, "And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

4:2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host [was] Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

4:3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he [Jabin, King of Canaan], had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel."

Enters Deborah - identified in Judges 4:4 as wife, Prophetess and Judge. The days find her busy at her day job: guiding, counselling and judging the people under a Palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. Deborah was a loving mother in Israel, and the people knew they could come to her to receive wise judgment. Her prophetic gift meant that she was a messenger for God and was in communication and communion with the God of Israel.

God had selected this woman to stand amongst the 12 judges that He would use to bring deliverance to His people when the Children of Israel repented of their apostasy and cried to God for help. In the interval between the death of Joshua and the time of Samuel, the first great Prophet of Israel, Deborah was the one that God empowered by His Spirit to bring about deliverance.

God gives her a message to inform Barak that he is to lead an army of 10,000 men and go up against the mighty, nine hundred chariots of iron marshalled by Jabin and led by Sisera. (Judges 4:7) It was a daunting and ostensibly impossible task.

What is Deborah's reaction to the message God has given her? How does she respond to God's call for action? Her reaction is clear and her response immediate. She calls for Barak and relays the message of God.

She acts promptly to the voice of God, through His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is alive and well in the Book of Judges and this case is no exception. Wherever there are men and women who are willing and responsive, God will empower them to do His will and accomplish great things.

The message was clear, Barak was to rally an army of 10,000 men from Naphtali and Zebulun and go up against Sisera the Captain of Jabin's army and God would give him the victory (Judges 4:6,7).

The passage does not indicate whether or not Deborah anticipated Barak's response, but his hesitancy to go without her, propelled her to the scene of the frontline of the battle. From sitting under a palm tree, she finds herself face to face with the oppressor of Israel, eyeball to eyeball with the enemy, gathered in sight of this ominous opponent - outnumbered, outweighed, outgunned.

But, Deborah is un-intimidated by the appearance of the situation, and with great courage and strength, she declares to Barak the outcome of the battle before him, "...Up for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not Lord gone out before thee" (Judges 4:14)? With those words of assurance and encouragement, Barak leads the army forward and God gives them a signal victory against the enemy.

Deborah demonstrated character traits that qualified her to be empowered by God's Spirit. She had a willing heart. She was available to be used by God to bless the people. She was faithful as daily she would sit and listen to the problems, disputes and concerns of the people.

## **Deborah was the one that God empowered by His Spirit to bring about deliverance.**

Deborah revealed a responsiveness to God's direction, willingness to be used by Him and courage in placing herself in a new and possibly dangerous situation.

Ephesians 4:11 states, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." And in 1 Corinthians 12:11, regarding the distribution of gifts, there "worketh one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

From the beginning of time, there was evidence of the Holy Spirit being an integral part of the Godhead, moving upon the face of the earth and intimately intertwined in the affairs of the human race. Clearly, God's instruments have been moved upon with power to do great and mighty things in the name of the Lord. Whenever there is an individual willing to be used, God is willing to infuse His power for His own glory and for the uplift of man.

The Bible clearly indicates that God is willing to pour out His Spirit upon us:

- When attacked by the enemy with doubts, fears, sickness, and trials; God's Word says in Isaiah 59:19, "...When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

- When called upon to speak up for God, God's Word says in Mark 13:11, "...take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, ...for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."

- When you feel unable, unprepared, and unqualified to be filled with the Spirit of God for His service, God's Word says in Luke 11:13, *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall [your] heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*

- When you are called upon to witness for God, to take the gospel to your community, share Jesus Christ with your workmates, remember God's Word says, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

**"Those who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to God, will constantly receive a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command.... Through co-operation with Christ, they are made complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence." GW 112.3**

One minute Deborah was sitting giving advice under a palm tree, the next she was the face of moral for soldiers about to go into battle. Who knows what plans God has in store for you! All indications are that Deborah, like the servant with the 5 talents, had put all her gifts to work for God, and just as in the parable the servants' talents were multiplied by use, so when you put what God has given you to use, when you become active in His service, when you determine to exercise your gifts for the saving of others, God will multiply your gifts, opportunities, and achievements in His name.

**"There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God." DA, p. 250**

The Holy Spirit's power is measureless, limitless, timeless. God wants to use you like He used Deborah.

In the end, God gave Deborah, this spirit-filled Judge, a victory song,

*5:1 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,*

*5:2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.*

*5:3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, [even] I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing [praise] to the LORD God of Israel.*

Like Deborah, God wants to fill us, empower us for mission and give us a victory song. In these last days, God wants to pour out His Spirit upon us. *Joel 2: 28, 29 says, "And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:*

*Joel 2:29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.*

Let us take up the challenge today, like Deborah to be filled with God's Spirit.



1. *North Caribbean Conference*
2. *Suriname Mission*
3. *Christian Education*
4. *Davis Memorial Hospital*
5. *Former Members*





Tuesday

## Jael – A Decisive Partner of God’s People

**Pastor Keslyn Daisley-Harrow** ness  
*Lecturer in Theology (Hebrew/Christian Witnessing)*  
*University of the Southern Caribbean—Trinidad*

### Scripture Text: Judges 4: 11-23; 5:24-27

Jael? Who is Jael? This is the usual response when asked about ‘the Jael of the Bible’. She comes to mind when her decisive action to slay an enemy with a tent peg offers itself as a hint to a forgetful mind. What a way to be remembered! But who was Jael? It appears as though her story just surfaces to highlight her bravery and she disappears into the abyss of Bible characters.

There is so much to learn from this story. Let us take the plunge into her life. In the book of Judges in the fourth chapter a brilliant masterpiece of God’s military leadership through Deborah emerges. At the risk of shrouding Jael’s light in Deborah’s pre-military deployment antic, allow me to remind you briefly of a very obscure detail. When Jabin king of Hazor decided it was in his best interest to ‘harshly oppress’ God’s people, God decided that during the time of Deborah the prophetess he would deliver his people. She sent for Barak and began to prophesy about the victory God’s people would have. It is here that Jael’s light flickers on and begins warmly glowing in the background. Read this quatrain of verses with me.

<sup>6</sup> And she (Deborah) sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? <sup>7</sup> And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. <sup>8</sup>

And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go. <sup>9</sup> And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

**It appears as though her story just surfaces to highlight her bravery and she disappears into the abyss of Bible characters.**

It sometimes appears that the prophecy of verse nine is a reference to Deborah. However, if one looks at the specificity of the prophecy, it is evident that God was here signaling unto the stage, Jael. The Bible says that Barak would not have the honors for having killed Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, who terrorized Israel for 20 years with these nine hundred chariots of iron. Instead, a woman would be the one to do that act of godly vengeance. That woman was Jael. God must have more information about Jael, to make such a sure prophecy about her. This prophecy tells us that she would be in the right place at the right time to do this job and no one else. Just her! It must mean something else about Jael is missing in this story. Let us search.



Verse 10 tells us that Barak and Deborah gathered the nearby tribes and went up to battle. One would think the battle story would start in verse eleven, but the author of Judges pauses to give a little more information about Jael's family. He says, "Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh." I hear your question. "Who is Heber?" Let us also read verse seventeen. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

The plot thickens, so we just read that Heber was Jael's husband, a descendant of Jethro, the Father in Law of Moses. He had some kind of family dispute and moved away with his wife and household planting himself and his family near Kedesh. We also learned that Heber and Jabin, Israel's enemy oppressor were friends. Jael's husband was a friend to the enemy of God.

Let us put the 'numbers' together. Where does it lead? What does it mean? What does it reveal about Jael? According to Judges 1:16, all the Kenites settled in the southern part of Israel, but this one Kenite family moved north as far north as Kedesh - the very region where this epic victory for God is realized. Living this far north also meant, living in the very place paraded by nine hundred chariots. Yet they lived in peace, while the rest of Gods people experienced harassment of the basest kind. These Kenites grew fat, and flourished because they were on the enemy's side. Nevertheless, things were not as they seemed. Even though Jael was not of the household of Israel, she embraced all of what God said to His people. She recognized that her husband was breaking God's law, by befriend- ing a Canaanite king. She knew that God had said that Israel was not to form leagues with the people of the surrounding nations, and so purposed in her heart that one day if given the opportunity she would do something for God.

Things appeared so great for this Kenite Family, that in the day of war, Mr Heber was not at home. Scholars believed that Sisera was so confident in his chariots and horses, that he arrayed the battle on

the riverbed of the Kishon River, just the place that God said he would give victory. It is the Song of Deborah in chapter five verse 21 that gives insight as to what God did to defeat the multitude of chariots. "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." If God did indeed cause the river to swell and wash away the chariots and some of the men, then that left some much-unprepared enemies. This explains why Sisera may have lost his chariot and ended up as a fugitive on foot. God orchestrates the battle in such a way that at this time, Barak is now occupied chasing the other fleeing soldiers in the opposite direction.

Sisera now flees to the tent of his king's friend

**Jael's husband was a friend to the enemy of God.**

Heber, hoping to find refuge and a familiar face. Jael meets him and things do go according to his plan. It is at this point that scholars differ on the motives of Jael. Some paint her as a conniving deceiver, who pretended to show warm friendly graces only to kill the unsuspecting Sisera. Others paint Sisera as being suspicious of the absent Heber and Jael as one who belies his fear with her art of seduction only to kill him. It is in fact Ellen G. White who through Inspiration gives us the truth of the matter.

She says, "When Sisera saw that his army was defeated, he left his chariot, and endeavored to make his escape on foot, as a common soldier. Approaching the tent of Heber, one of the descendants of Jethro, the fugitive was invited to find shelter there. In the absence of Heber, Jael, his wife, courteously offered Sisera a refreshing draught, and opportunity for repose, and the weary general soon fell asleep.

Jael was at first ignorant of the character of her guest, and she resolved to conceal him; but when she afterward learned that he was Sisera, the enemy of God and of His people, her purpose changed. As he lay before her asleep, she overcame her natural reluctance to such an act, and slew him by driving a nail through his temples, pinning him to the earth.

As Barak, in pursuit of his enemy, passed that way, he was called in by Jael to behold the vain-glorious captain dead at his feet - slain by the hand of a woman." Two victories rang out that day, one for Israel, one for Jael's family.

Jael was a decisive partner of God's people. God knew He could count on her, because He saw her heart longing for the moment to serve Him to the fullest.

Here are three important points we can take away from this victory.

1. Being decisive for God may go against known family preferences.
2. Being decisive for God is not an action, it is a heart condition.
3. Being decisive for God means accepting a decisive God.

Like Jael, we may find ourselves between the difficult positions of wanting to serve God with all our heart and some kind of hindrance. The change in our circumstance will come at the time that God wills, but the desire must first begin in the heart. When God in His will provides us with an opportunity to make good on our desire to serve Him, may we be as decisive as Jael was. It is only by following the promptings of God's Holy Spirit, that any promise to God in the heart becomes a living reality.



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1. *South Leeward Conference*
2. *St Lucia Mission*
3. *Students in Adventist Schools in CARU*
4. *Dental Clinics in CARU*
5. *All Praise Teams and Song Service Leaders*

**"Prayer is not asking.  
Prayer is putting oneself  
in the hands of God, at  
His disposition, and lis-  
tening to His voice in  
the depth of our hearts."  
- Mother Teresa**



Wednesday

## Hannah – A Spirit-led Mother

**Pastor Nicola Newsam**  
*District Pastor*  
*Tobago Mission of SDA*

### Scripture Text:

One of the most commented on female figures in scripture is Hannah; a woman who understood that the arms of God provided the safest refuge though her life was marred by grave provocation. Hence, today we can reflect on the way she functioned and confidently conclude that she truly was a Spirit-led mother.

#### 1. A Spirit-led mother finds the altar of God

Hannah prostrated herself at the altar of the lord. She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore (1 Samuel 1:10). Her plea to her God was simple; she wanted a man child.

There are many things in this life we desire. Many of us have prostrated ourselves at the altar of God and pleaded bitterly for something. Perhaps it was for a spouse, maybe a job, or like Hannah you pleaded to God for a child. Whatever the desire was, you came to the altar of your God because you understand that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

You found yourself many times at the altar of God because 1 John 5:14, 15 teaches: “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know, that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”

This woman who had not yet conceived, petitioned her heavenly father because she knew He is the burden bearer, the problem solver, the restorer, the repairer and deliverer. Being led by the Spirit of God she came to the Altar.

#### 2. A Spirit-led mother knows the Word of God

Accompanying Hannah’s plea was a pledge “...O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head” (1 Samuel 1:11).

In Exodus 13:2 God instructs Moses to communicate to the people, “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” Therefore, the vow made by Hannah did not generate from her but rather she was repeating to God His own instructions and her desire to follow through with His command.

**There are many things in this life we desire. Many of us have prostrated ourselves at the altar of God and pleaded bitterly for something.**



When we approach the throne of God to ask anything, we must first consider how this request fits in with God's eternal plan for our life? The desire of my heart; is it only temporal or is there evidence of the spiritual? We must ask ourselves, will this request bring me closer to God or will it drive me away?

Hannah knew that her request was not selfish, she did not wish a child to boast to the one who "provoked her sorely (vs.6)." Her desire for a child was not to dispel talks of barrenness, neither did she wish for a bundle of joy to make her husband love her. He already did (vs.5). This woman wanted a "man child" to dedicate to her God.

Ellen White's counsel in the book *Adventist Home* remains relevant today. She proposes, "These children are to be educated and trained to become disciples of Christ, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." This work of molding, refining, and polishing is the mother's. The character of the child is to be developed. The mother must engrave upon the tablet of the heart lessons as enduring as eternity; and she will surely meet the displeasure of the Lord if she neglects this sacred work or allows anything to interfere with it" (AH 234.1).

Our children do not belong to us, they belong to our Heavenly Father. We are mere custodians of this precious gift. Our first task is to entrust them into the arms of the Lord.

### **3. A Spirit-led mother walks in the joy of the Lord**

So Hannah prayed, but her prayer was soon interrupted by the priest Himself. Examining her posture, considering the hour and knowing not what she uttered the priest brought no words of commendation but rather an accusation. "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." Though startled by his stern rebuke, she responds in the character of her name, Hannah meaning the graceful one. "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the

LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto" (15, 16).

Eli was deeply moved by her response, and without knowing what her petition was he pronounced a blessing. "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him" (vs 17).

After this she rose up and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad because the joy of the Lord gives us strength. Knowing His promises, knowing His word we move forward in faith and function like we have received because God has promised to impart. It is not the gift in hand that ought to make us glad, it is the God in our heart that gives us hope and will make us rejoice.

Regardless of the position we are in, or the trial we are going through, we can find joy in the promises of God. The Psalmist testified, "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy" (Psalm 94:19).

### **4. A Spirit-led mother keeps her promise**

Hannah and Elkanah went home, and in the midst of intimacy, God remembered her. By the following year, when it was time to return to Shiloh, baby Samuel was already born. However, that year Hannah did not go up to Shiloh. To some it might seem she was breaking her promise but this Spirit-led mother had a plan. "I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever" ( 1 Samuel 1:22).

Hannah needed the time to develop the cognitive ability of her son, so that when she handed him over in the temple he could be of immediate use to Eli. "From the earliest dawn of intellect she had taught her son to love and reverence God and to regard himself as the Lord's.

**Regardless of the position we are in, or the trial we are going through, we can find joy in the promises of God.**

By every familiar object surrounding him she had sought to lead his thoughts up to the Creator” (PP 572).

After the child was weaned Hannah returned to the temple. When she saw Eli, she joyfully exclaimed, “Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.” And he worshipped the Lord there.

Hannah pleaded with God for one thing, a man child. She vowed that when she received this child, she would return him to the Lord. This was no vague promise but one that came from the command of God himself. Receiving the assurance from the Priest of the Lord Hannah joyously went to her home. When at last her gift was given, she did not retract on her commitment but prepared the babe to serve in the House of the Lord. “She did not ask for her son worldly greatness, but she earnestly pleaded that he might attain that greatness which Heaven values - that he might honor God and bless his fellow men” (PP 572.2).

May we like Hannah, in every aspect of our lives, be led by the Spirit of God. When that happens, God will bless us beyond our petition. 1 Samuel 2: 21 informs us, “And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.”

What is your desire? What is your plea? Whatever you need today ask it of the Lord. For there is nothing too hard for your God. Always allow His Spirit to lead.



## Prayer Requests

1. *South Caribbean Conference*
2. *Grenada Conference*
3. *Students in Adventist Schools in CARU*
4. *All Church Musicians*
5. *Community Services Members*



"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty."  
- E.M. Bounds



Thursday

## Naomi – A Mother-in-law Worth Emulating

**Pastor Melanie Rodgers**  
*District Pastor*  
*South Leeward Conference*

**Scripture Text: Ruth 1:16-18**

### Introduction:

The acts of the Holy Spirit are unselfish. Whenever one moves beyond the boundary of self to others, such an act is normally regarded as praiseworthy and admirable. The demonstration of the unselfish acts by Naomi has captured the admiration of millions of readers. This book speaks to the power of godly influence, with its rippling effects.

The story of the book of Ruth is a bitter-sweet one. It is bitter at first, but certainly sweet in the end. Its contents resonate with affirmation of women for all times, and it is one in which many women who feel downtrodden, distraught, frustrated, and even on the bitter end of life, can take courage. It tells us that even when one has to drink the bitter cup, one doesn't have to give it to others. Yes, we are reminded that **“all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8: 28).**

### Driven by famine:

Famine drove Elimelech and his family from Bethlehem Judah, to the foreign land of Moab. Yes, we see a picture of a closely knitted family heading for the greener pasture of Moab. Life is not always rosy. There are times when we find ourselves among thorns. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations that we have not bargained for. Where you are, and what you are now doing, may be a reaction to something else.

### Worse than famine:

Naomi's husband died in Moab. This must have been to her worse than the famine. What do you do when your heartbeat is gone? You have got to make God your hope. She was now left with her two sons (Ruth 1:3). I believe that every day she got up and looked at her two sons, the genetic expressions of her husband, that image flooded her with rich memories: those eyes, that wonderful voice, and those powerful hands.

Tragedy struck again. Her two sons, who got married to Moabite daughters are now dead. Her fortune turned out to be worse than a nightmare. Loss on top of grief is a recipe for depression.

### Facing the grim reality:

Nothing for her could replace the loss of her husband, and now her sons. At her age, the mother-in-law status was no longer sustainable. These two ladies will have to look to greener pastures for their future husbands.



**The story of the book of Ruth is a bitter-sweet one. It is bitter at first, but certainly sweet in the end.**

The time had come to bid them goodbye. **“Go; return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept” (Ruth 1:8, 9).** Very emotionally charged setting. Both however, remained defiant. Her warmth and gracious spirit had won their hearts. Orpah summoned the courage to bid her goodbye, but Ruth insisted that she would remain.

### **Resistless love:**

The charm of a godly woman is irresistible. Ruth was contented not only to remain with her, but to go with her wherever she went. She refused to be deterred by her statement. She would not leave her presence.

### **Love beyond self:**

She says, **“Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if but death part you from me” (Ruth 1:16, 17).** These words are timeless and monumental. They expressed the powerful impact of a godly mother-in-law. The selfless nature of Naomi was contagious. This is witnessing at its best. Friends, I hear Jesus echoing this sentiment: **“Let your light so shine among men that others may see His glory and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).** Ruth had come to the point that she wanted to emulate the beauty, the grace, and the godly life of Naomi.

### **Bitter ordeal:**

She will stick with her. At least she has not returned alone. One senses that bitter regret as she reflected on her history. The Bible says, that the city welcomed them (Ruth 1:19). A daughter of Bethlehem had returned. Imagine the excitement of

those who knew her before. But, for Naomi, there was nothing to gloat about. Regrettably she expressed, **“Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1: 20, 21).** Here is a mother-in-law who was not afraid to hide her true emotions. She knew what it feels like to be hurt. Many of us have had experiences that have been bitter. They are so bitter that we wish for them to remain where they are - in the past. It seems at times that when God is about to do great things for us, He will have to dismantle our present, rearrange our path in life, disrupt our state of mind, then prepare us for that better tomorrow.

God would not leave Naomi to wallow in her past. Unknown to her, God had already set up her future. He knows how to walk us from our dismal past, into His glorious future. He at times will put you down, to set you up.

### **Naomi the match maker:**

Glimpses of the future begin to dawn in Chapter 2. God in His providence had set up Boaz, a kinsman of her husband. This man’s situation contrasted that of Naomi’s. She came back empty, but Boaz remained, and was overflowing with wealth (Ruth 2:1). The chapter indicates to us that Naomi would have had discussion with Boaz about Ruth (Ruth 2:11). He then ancestor in combination with the divine lineage of Abraham set the stage for Boaz to be the man.

**Strategic advice :** Naomi can be seen and heard in chapter 3 giving Ruth strategic advice. She is seen here as a match maker. She saw a brighter future for Ruth in her kinsman, Boaz. In ancient Israelite society the word **goel**, speaks to a well-defined legal obligation that would fall to the next of kin. Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer would be the one to bring things around for this hurting family. At all cost, she must use her heritage, knowledge, tact, and influence to secure this marriage. The future with God is still better than the past. Naomi counseled her on her approach. She must intrude on his presence, but timing must be crucial in this matter.



Naomi was a strategist. She is seen here crafting out a secure future for Ruth (Ruth 3:3, 4). Ruth remained true to her vow. She will not leave this mother-in-law. Her response is noteworthy. She says. **“All that you say unto me, I will do” (Ruth 3:5)**. What a powerful response. This is credibility at its best!

**Godly Influence:** In chapter four the stage is set for major prophetic background. A new chapter now unfolded in the lives of these two women. Fortune had opened its floodgate as divine providence led the way. Ruth had become Boaz’s wife (Ruth 4:13). Naomi’s best days began to unfold. Her act of unselfish love did not go unnoticed. We are told: **“And the women said unto Naomi, blessed be the Lord, which has not left you this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto you a restorer of life, and a nourisher of your old age: for your daughter-in-law, which loved you, which is better to you than seven sons, has borne him” (Ruth 4: 14, 15)**.

It is out of this relationship that God sought to show up. It is etched in the genealogy of Jesus. The book ends with this statement, “And Obed, begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David” (Ruth 4:22).

It is from this genetic stream that the Saviour of the world came. Ruth, the Moabite became an ancestor of David. The twist of history saw the reference of Ruth in the illustrious history of Jesus’ ancestor (Matt. 1:5).

### **Conclusion:**

Wrapped up in this beautiful story is the gospel of unselfish love. Here we find a pre-gospel of unselfish love preached in the Old Testament. *Goel*, kinsman-Redeemer announces Christ who became one with us in order to redeem us from the bitter agony of sin. Yes, we see the rippling effect of this winsome mother-in-law demonstrated on a wider scale on Golgotha’s Hill. A planet destined for disaster has been redeemed. Yes, Naomi’s act mirrored the greatest demonstration of love beyond self (John 3:16).



## Prayer Requests

1. *Safe Travel for all Church Leaders in CARU*
2. *Job opportunities for unemployed members*
3. *Faithfulness in the returning of tithes and offering by church members*
4. *All Deacons and Deaconesses*
5. *Visible presence of the church in the community*

Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain. “Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.” Ellen G. White



## Elisabeth– The Mother of John the Incompara-

**Pastor Carol Forteau**

*District Pastor*

*South Caribbean Conference of SDA*

### **Scripture Text: Luke 1:5-25; 7:28**

Even at a cursory level, the “curse” was evident; at a time when culture ruled the day and the idiomatic rule of the day was to maintain production, otherwise the human race could be jeopardized. She must have fasted and prayed countless times. She probably even broke company with sleep at a time when her desire to produce was more than her desire for sleep. With tear-soaked pillow, her tears punctuating her prayers, you can hear her asking God to make the impossible possible, to remove the “curse”, to take away the disgrace. If you listen more intently, you can hear her telling Him there is still time, there are still desires and expectations, but still, the years advanced and there was no evidence that God was even listening and so the heart-break, malignity and disparagingly critical experience continued.

Who is this person that her name should be part of the Biblical landscape of conversations thousands of years later? Who is she that defied the odds at a time in history when women relegated? Who is she that produced the harbinger/forerunner? She is Elisabeth, a daughter of Aaron the high priest. Her

name is derived from the ancient Greek meaning: God Is An Oath/God of Seven/my God is abundance. Her husband was also a priest. She is noted for being the mother of John the Baptist, the incomparable. The Word of God says in Luke Ch. 1:6 that both Elisabeth and her husband Zacharias were righteous before the Lord. In other words, in reference to observing all of God’s commandments, was the evidence of their good conversations and also of their good works.

**Who is she that defied the odds at a time in history when women were relegated?**

### **BLAMELESS BUT BARREN**

We live in a time where some governments of the day give bonus incentives for having babies. In France this incentive program was designed to encourage childbearing, but as we step back into the culture that Elisabeth lived in thousands of years ago, it was considered a disgrace to be married and childless.

She was an exceptional woman, referred to as righteous. She was also blameless before God, but in addition, she was called barren. This is without a doubt an oxymoron. How possible is it to be righteous, blameless, but yet barren, all at the same time? Being righteous is a great and wonderful place to be in the spiritual realm. Many people are self-righteous but Elisabeth was righteous before God (Luke Ch. 1v6) but barren. She must have been familiar with the Scripture in Ps 127:3 that says: *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.* She must have been confused as to why God was not answering her prayers. Why was her righteousness not being rewarded when... “the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous avails much” (James 5:16)?

The fact that she had the DNA of a high priest, and that her husband was also of the priesthood gave no authority to her womb to produce her desire. To serve in the temple, to light incense and to be able to minister before the Lord, one has to be in the bloodline or of the Aaronic tribe or Levi... it would seem that Elisabeth had everything going for her. Her genetic makeup was intact, but yet God was “unresponsive.” She felt like a curse was resting upon her, she even prayed back God’s promises to Him. She remembered in Genesis 18:14 when God said, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” To leave no doubt in our minds, the Bible says that Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41).

## ...how possible is it to be righteous, blameless but yet barren, all at the same time?

The angel, in speaking with Mary concerning Elisabeth said, “She was called barren” (Luke 1:36), ágonos (Greek), fruitless, and unproductive. She was unable to produce what she desired most. She was unable to take away the shame and ridicule that became part of the fabric of her external and internal self. Empathize here; think what this could mean or what this can do to the human psyche. Poor self-esteem was consuming away her years. Can any of you identify with Elisabeth? What she wanted more than anything else was to have a baby, but her womb was unproductive. She was a deeply spiritual and godly woman but her womb was unproductive and adoption was not an option.

### IT’S ALL ABOUT GOD’S TIMING

This message is designed to relieve someone’s burden or to pull someone from the brink of turning away from God or to encourage someone to encourage another. How often have you felt that God is not listening to your heartfelt prayer? What are you burdened with today? How often have your negative situations and circumstances climaxed to the fullest degree and there was no “light at the end of the tunnel”? What do you do? What drives you to continue looking for that “light”? One does not usually conclude that it is possible to be filled with the Spirit of God and yet experience a burdensome life. Have you experienced anything of this nature in your walk with God, where all you could do was to trust God and wait on Him? I know this does not always sound like a good prospect, but this is exactly what Elisabeth did. Her strong faith in God caused her to remain in a state of expectancy; while nothing else was working, she remained expectant.

It is important to note that God is not limited by our circumstances; He is not rushed when we are roused; He is not surprised by our situation; He is not clueless when we are, and certainly His hands are not shortened that He cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear. (Isa 59:1)

The strength acquired in prayer to God will prepare us for our daily duties. The temptations to which we are daily exposed make prayer a necessity.

E. G. White

## **RISING OUT OF OBSCURITY**

It appears that Elizabeth rose out of obscurity because she defied nature and birthed a child when her internal rhythm was already out of sync with biology but what was really responsible for her prominence? Well you may say she was not the only woman in the Bible to give birth when biology said she could not. Some may say because her father and husband were priests, but what do you say? Could it be because she gave birth to prophecy? When Elisabeth's husband was told that he would have a son, he reasoned that he was not able to perform the required duties to facilitate such a feat. The angel then told him, "Because you don't believe, you will be voiceless for a season" (Lu.1:20). However, we must remember that John's birth was prophesied in Isa. Ch. 40 v 3. "The voice of him who cries in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

What do you think? Is there a greater fact to consider for Elisabeth's prominence? Maybe Elisabeth herself remembered that said prophecy, and added to that, her response in verse 25 of Luke chapter 1 says that God was taking away her reproach; she was concerned about the societal aspect of her life. I believe that because she was filled with the Holy Spirit and had such a great faith in God, obscurity took a back seat to prominence; anything else is just commentary.

God chose a woman of spirit, of faith and of obedience to nurture and teach a great prophet like John the Incomparable so that nature will recede.

## **TRUST GOD WITH UNANSWERED PRAYERS**

Reflect on these:

What do you want more than anything in the world? Elisabeth wanted a baby and she gave birth to prophecy.

What has God prophesied about you? What has He spoken in and over your life that is yet to come to past? Didn't He say to you in Luke 1:37, For with God nothing...?

What was the driving force in Elisabeth's life? Is something missing from your life?

Is the aging process nearing its climax and you feel that you haven't produced anything of significance for God?

Consider this promise: They shall still bear fruit in old age... (Ps. 92:14). Even if your prayers are punctuated by tears, be persistent in faith; God is always on time.

What we can all agree on is when the Holy Spirit is present in a person's life, not only the impossible happens but obscurity is relegated and prominence is procured.

Trust God with the circumstances and timing in your life; He will certainly satisfy Himself in you, in His timing.

It is believed that the hands that rock the cradle rules the world. If that is true, Elisabeth and Zacharias were partly responsible, together with their miracle, John the Incomparable, the forerunner, for turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

**What are your hands presently involved in?**



1. *All Lay Evangelist*
2. *Financial blessings for all members*
3. *SDA Students in secular universities*
4. *University of the Southern Caribbean*
5. *Community Hospital*





Final Sabbath

## Mary – The Mother of the Messiah

**Pastor Kay White**  
*Personnel Ministries Director*  
*South Leeward Conference of SDA*

### **Scripture Text: Luke 1:5-25; 7:28**

Mary, the mother of the Messiah, is a revered biblical character within Christendom. Mary's prominence is often associated with her supposed extraordinary status at birth, which has been designated by some Christian theologians as the "immaculate conception". The Catholic Catechism claims that "Mary was exempt from original sin contracted by the rest of mankind, and the exemption took place at the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother" (pg. 158). Moreover, the Catholic Catechism asserts that Mary like Jesus was sinless, she was resurrected, received into heaven and as a result, she is crowned the queen of heaven, and assumes the function of an intercessor. As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not agree with the notion of an "immaculate conception" nor do we sanction the viewpoint that Mary is presently a mediator in heaven. Nevertheless, we consider Mary, comparable to many other biblical characters, a spiritual model from whose life significant lessons can be retrieved. Therefore, today's message seeks to investigate defining moments in the life of Mary, with specific focus on key individuals who were closely connected to her life and mission. By the conclusion of this sermon, it is my hope that we will receive invaluable lessons which are pertinent to the spiritual journey of a contemporary Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

### **Accept Divine Providence**

God's divine providence in Mary's life is initially unveiled through the experiences and encounters of Zacharias and his wife, Elisabeth. In the book of Luke, the apostle pronounces two very important births: the birth of John the Baptist, and the birth of Jesus Christ.

**As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not agree with the notion of an "immaculate conception" nor do we sanction the viewpoint that Mary is presently a mediator in heaven.**

The book commences by introducing Zacharias and Elisabeth as a highly esteemed couple. Luke 1: 5-6 states, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." The name Zacharias originates from the Hebrew name Zekaryah which means "Jehovah remembers."

Similarly, the name Elisabeth is derived from a Hebrew name which suggests that “God has made an oath.” Therefore, it is evident that God had a special purpose for this couple; a purpose, which was also interconnected with God’s plan for Mary.

Luke’s introduction of Zacharias and Elisabeth is intriguing and exhilarating. The righteous couple is characterized as exemplary keepers of the law and strict observers of the traditions. This spiritually mature couple serves as an example to Seventh-day Adventists families. In their book, *Hope for Today’s Families*, authors Willie and Elaine Oliver addressing the importance of exemplary families propose that a strong spiritual foundation will guarantee successful family relationships. They suggest that strong families are built and maintained when families “put into practice the ethical teachings of Jesus rather than building on the sands of [their] own opinions, or those offered by the loose morals of our times” (pg.53). Ellen White validates their conviction when she explains in *Adventist Home* that “The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart” (Pg. 32). Brothers and sisters, when Seventh-day Adventist families embrace and model the teachings of Jesus they are positioned to influence and transform their society.

**It is God’s desire for us as Adventist Christians to experience abundance in all areas of our lives.**

However, the inspirational representation of Zacharias and Elisabeth at the beginning of Luke shifts in verse seven when the scripture unveils that “they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.” In the Jewish society, childlessness was perceived as a grave condition, and barrenness was considered a “great reproach.” Nevertheless, God had a plan for Zacharias and Elizabeth and I want to remind God’s people today that when God has a plan for you, God’s plan will always be realized in your life.

As Seventh-day Adventists we are challenged to shine spiritually with the knowledge that there will be moments or periods of barrenness in our experience. Today, there are married couples within our congregations who are childless and anticipating the precious gift of a child from the Lord. I encourage you to continue through prayer and a demonstration of faith and accept God’s ultimate will and divine providence in your life. There are some who are listening to this message today who are experiencing arid moments socially, financially, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. It is God’s desire for us as Adventist Christians to experience abundance in all areas of our lives. In Psalm 1: 3, the Bible indicates that the Christian should “be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” The symbolic use of the “tree” which is planted in this text reinforces the promise of prosperity and maturity in the life of the Christian even during moments of affliction. Thus, we are instructed today to be deeply rooted in God’s providence, grounded in our faith, and firm in the doctrines of the Church.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the barrenness which Zacharias and Elisabeth endured was within God’s divine providence since their son, John the Baptist, was positioned by God to introduce the Messiah to planet Earth. Subsequently, John the Baptist exclaimed in John 1:29: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” and in John 3:30: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Brothers and sisters we should trust God’s timing and embrace His will “without wavering; because He who has promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

### **Display Total Obedience**

When Mary is introduced in the biblical narrative her family background is not acknowledged or declared. Hence, it is apparent that her family’s status or position was not the determining factor when God selected her to be the mother of the Messiah.

**This spiritually mature couple serves as an example to Seventh-day Adventists families.**

**Mary's response to the favour of God is a noticeable contrast to Zacharias' since Zacharias did not immediately embrace the pronouncement made by the Angel Gabriel. In Luke 1: 18-20 "Zacharias said unto the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."**

The scripture solely discloses that Mary is a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph. The scripture says, "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 2: 26, 27). Church of God, when God chooses an individual He considers that person's willingness and their potential to be obedient to the call. God does not consider a person's family history or background. God is not concerned about the prominence or prestige associated with a person's family or community.

Luke 1: 28 states, "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." It is significant that the angel commences his pronouncement by notifying Mary that she is a recipient of divine favour and grace. The angel then explains to Mary the plan of God: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:31). Mary's response to the favour of God is a noticeable contrast to Zacharias' since Zacharias did not immediately embrace the pronouncement made by the Angel Gabriel. In Luke 1: 18-20 "Zacharias said unto the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." The angel instantly reprimands him for his lack of faith, "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time." Brothers and sisters, you may feel unworthy of God's favour, and His plan for your life may seem impossible, but you should accept His purpose and respond with faith.

Mary's desire to be obedient to the plan of God prompts her favorable response to the angel and she voices in Luke 1: 38, "Behold the handmaid of the

Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Mary is not coerced or commanded to become the mother of the messiah. She accepts the angel's message with humility and of her own free will. It is clear that Mary had made a decision even before this encounter to completely surrender to the will of God. Mary did not permit the possible penalties of such a decision to prevent her from embracing God's will. She considered it a privilege to become the mother of the savior who "will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1: 21) She did not think about her reputation or the implications of this pregnancy on her present engagement to Joseph. Her determination to be compliant to the will of God was greater than the expectations of her family and society. When God reveals His divine calling on your life, you should not allow anyone or anything to distract you.

Mary's response to God's command also sanctions the significance of the word of God. She asserts, "Be it unto me according to thy word." Today as Adventist Christians we should be consistently directed by and be completely obedient to the word of God. Roy R. Brown in *The Battle is Not Yours, It's God's*, submits that "God's promises are sure. As the Sovereign King, His word is His bond"(Pg. 95). The word of God reveals a faithful, loving and compassionate God. A God who through the power of His Holy Spirit transforms the life and character of anyone who is willing to be obedient. Hebrews 4:12 declares that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

**Her determination to be compliant to the will of God was greater than the expectations of her family and society.**

## Reflect on the Power and Purpose of God

The night of Jesus' birth an angel approached shepherds in a field to disclose God's power, and His purpose for lost humanity. Luke 2: 8-9 states, "In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. An Angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them." The message of the Messiah's birth was not taken to the religious leaders, but conveyed to humble shepherds. Church of God, I am convinced that there is a symbolic use of the word "shepherd" in this verse and it serves to foreshadow the life that Jesus would live. Jesus was destined to live a life of humility as His purpose was to serve and save humanity. Jesus is the chief shepherd who came to Earth to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

The magnificence and splendor of God was also revealed on the night of Jesus' birth. The angel said to the shepherds, "do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You shall find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12). Immediately after this declaration, the shepherds heard a choir of angels from heaven praising the Supreme King of the universe whose arrival in the form of humanity was a part of a great plan to save a lost planet. Luke 2 verses 13 and 14 proclaim, "And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest. And on Earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Church of God, when we reflect on Jesus as the messiah, this will lead us into ascribing worship and praise to "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). An acknowledgement of Jesus as messiah is crucial, but it is a personal encounter with Him that transforms the heart and creates an attitude of gratitude. The shepherds located Jesus that night in a manger as predicted by the angel, and they left rejoicing "and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which was just as the angel had told them" (Luke 2:20). The shep-

herds celebrated and experienced God's transforming power after they visited the baby Jesus.

It was this unusual visit by shepherds which triggered Mary's moments of reflections on the power and purpose of God. Luke 2: 19 states, "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." This statement is a significant one since Luke mentions it twice in this chapter. As the shepherds professed that Jesus was the messiah, Mary might have reminisced on the past and struggled to comprehend all that had happened since the angel Gabriel's appearance. Mary's recollections on these circumstances confirmed that this child Jesus was no ordinary child. He was the son of God. Church, we too should identify defining moments in our lives and reflect on the way the Lord has led us. Our childhood experiences, even the difficult moments all contribute to the realization of God's plan for our lives. Ellen White in the text, *Life Sketches of Ellen G White*, pg. 196 reminds us that "we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history."

**The magnificence and splendor of God was also revealed on the night of Jesus' birth.**

## Demonstrate Full Confidence

Another enlightening experience in the life of Mary is situated in the book of John. In this narrative, Mary attended a wedding with Jesus and His disciples. Some scholars speculate that the bride or groom might have been close friends or relatives of Mary and as a consequence she might have been involved in the wedding preparations. It is recorded that during the celebration, the wine supply declined and this was an alarming incident as in the Jewish culture, wine was a symbol of abundance, jubilation and festivity. Hence, the absence of wine at the wedding represented barrenness and humiliation.



Mary immediately responded to the need at this wedding and exhibited her confidence in the power of God. The scripture says, “His mother saith unto the servants whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

Some biblical scholars propose that Mary employed her parental authority to encourage Jesus to assist at this wedding of her relatives. Others believe that Mary was eager and hopeful that Jesus would declare himself as the messiah by means of a miracle at the wedding. Still others suggest that it was Mary’s spiritual insight and her own connection with God which prompted her to seek Jesus’ assistance. Whatever her motives were, when Mary provided instructions to the servants at the wedding she emphasized, “Whatever he says to you, do it,” and in the Greek the statement can be read, “Do what he says at once without question.” The servants acted in obedience to the command of Jesus and they were able to observe a miracle of water being transformed into wine. As servants of God today, we must demonstrate confidence in the God who is able to make the impossible possible.

After this miracle occurred Mary disappeared into background. The mother of the Messiah can be regarded an evangelist here as she pointed the people to Jesus as the only one who can change any difficult situation. In our preaching and witnessing we must fade into the background and allow Jesus to be the central theme since He will lead men and women into His Kingdom. There is an important message here to all of us. Our role as Christians is to exalt Jesus and share the urgent message, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” There are many who are struggling to make a decision for Christ, and we must emphasize the significance of obedience.

## Conclusion

Are you experiencing barrenness today? Are you confronted with an impossible circumstance? Are you waiting on God to transform a problematic situation in your family, in your home, workplace or in your church? I encourage you like Mary to embrace God’s divine providence, demonstrate total obedience to His will, reflect on those defining moments which have revealed God’s power and pur-

pose in your life, and exhibit full confidence in the God who “will never fail you nor abandon you.” Deuteronomy 3:16. I want to leave with you the words of this beautiful hymn which is # 590 in the SDA Hymnal.

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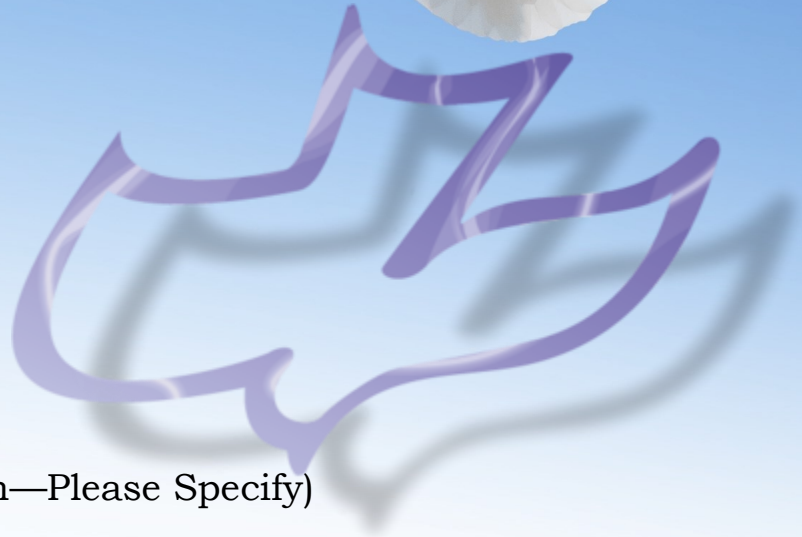
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Life Sketches of Ellen G. White. Mountain View, CA:



1. *Outpouring of the Holy Spirit*
2. *Marriages*
3. *Phenomenal Church Growth*
4. *Restful Nights for our Senior members*
5. *Businesses and business men and women of our Church*

# SUGGESTED Program



Singspiration

Prayer

Welcome

Special Music

Gem

Offering (Poor, Education—Please Specify)

Theme Song (Lord Transform me)

## **Sermon**

Hymn

Congregational Prayer (In groups of two)

Closing Song

Benediction

**“There never was a time when more workers were needed than at the present. There are brethren and sisters throughout all our ranks who should discipline themselves to engage in this work; in all our churches something should be done to spread the truth. It is the duty of all to study the various points of our faith.”** —*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880.



CARU

**HOLY SPIRIT**

*Week*

**January 11–18, 2020**

