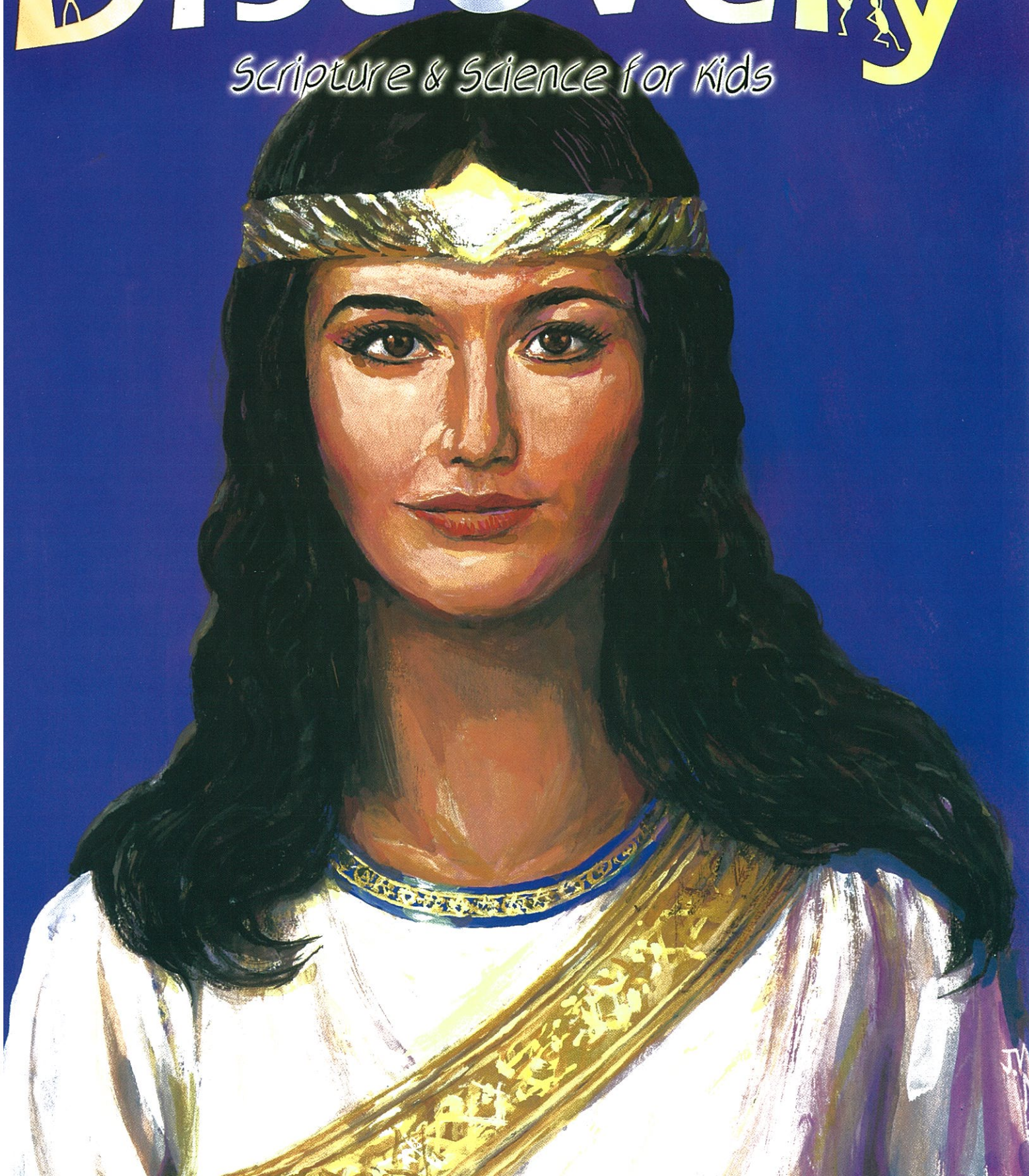


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Scripture & Science for Kids



ESTHER

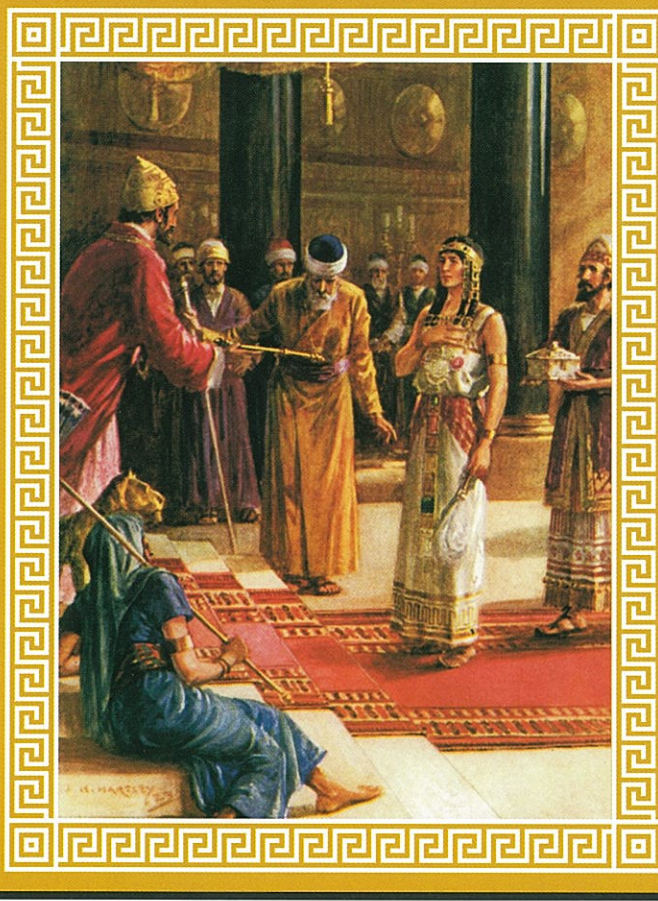
Queen of Courage

JANA LYONS

What Bible characters come to mind when you think of courage? The apostle Paul? David? Or perhaps Daniel in the lions' den? Most of the time we only think of **men** when people mention heroes of the Bible. But the Bible also talks about courageous women—like Ruth, Hannah, and Mary. In the Old Testament book of Esther, we learn of another brave woman whose courage often is overlooked.

When Esther was a young Jewish woman (with no mother or father, but only a cousin named Mordecai to look after her), Ahasuerus (a-haz-u-E-rus), King of Persia, was searching for a new queen. King Ahasuerus decided to hold a beauty pageant to help him decide who the new queen should be. Beautiful girls from all over the kingdom were brought to his palace to be treated with special oils, spices, and food. Esther was so beautiful that she won the favor and approval of the king more than any other girl. He set a crown on her head and made her queen.

About 4½ years after being crowned queen, one of the king's royal officials named Haman became very angry with the Jews and wanted



to destroy all of them (this would have included Queen Esther!). When Esther's cousin Mordecai heard about the plot, he asked Queen Esther to go and beg the king for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people. The only problem was that the king had isolated himself in the inner court, and anyone who approached him without being called upon could be killed. [Believe it or not, talking to the king without being invited (even if you were the queen) would mean risking your life.] But Esther was courageous enough

to face her fears in order to save her people.

When the king saw Esther, he held out the golden scepter and welcomed her into his presence (Esther 5:2). After she begged him to spare her life and the lives of all Jews, the king not only saved the Jews from being killed, but he wrote new laws that protected them from any other attempted attack on their lives.

By her example, Esther teaches us that we can overcome fear with God's help. Just as she stood up for what was right, God expects us to do the same. For "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

One of the most famous and most misunderstood women in the Bible is Mary, the mother of Jesus. We do not know much about her background. But everything that we do know about her from the Bible tells us that she was a remarkable woman.

She probably was a teenager when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Savior of the world. She did not understand how she could possibly have a baby, but she believed in the power of God and accepted the responsibility.

Months later, Mary was willing to make the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Joseph, even though she was pregnant. Except for Joseph, she had no family or friends to help her, and no hospital or doctor to care for her and her new baby.

About two years after Jesus' birth, Mary and her family faced a potential tragedy when Herod wanted to kill her Son. Once again, she and Joseph had to leave behind the people and places they knew in order to travel hundreds of miles to Egypt. When God told them that they could go back to Palestine, Mary made the long trip with a small child—without grumbling or complaining.

When Jesus grew to be a man, Mary continued to support her Son. She was with

Jesus when He performed His first miracle. She and His brothers came to see Him while He was preaching to great crowds (Matthew 12:46-50). After about three years of preaching, she learned that her Son had been arrested, badly beaten, put on trial, and sentenced to die. She stood at the foot of the cross with Jesus' good friend John and heard those around her say terrible things to her Son. She heard His cry for a drink, but she could not help Him.

She saw Jesus struggle to breathe, but she could not comfort Him or make the hurt go away, as she undoubtedly had done many times when He was a child. And as Jesus died, Mary heard Him tell John to take care of Mary as if she were his own mother (John 19:26).

As much as her heart ached after watching her Son suffer and die, Mary did not give up on her commitment to God. Just a few weeks after Jesus' death, she was with the apostles and some other disciples in an upper room, praying (Acts 1:14).

Several times during her life, Mary had to face things she did not understand, as well as

terrible tragedy. But she never gave up on the love and promises of Almighty God. She was a woman of quiet strength who made the decision to trust God and obey Him when she was very young. And she never wavered in that commitment.

- Mary - the Mother of Jesus

RHONDA THOMPSON



RUTH: ORDINARY WOMAN, OR ANCESTOR OF CHRIST?

MELINDA HARRUB

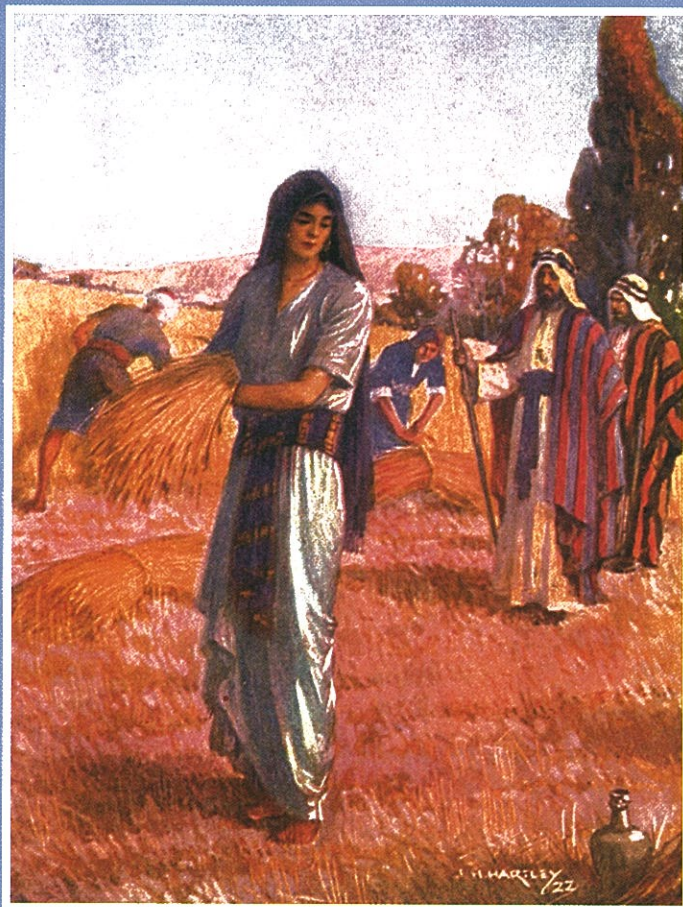
At first glance, the Old Testament story of Ruth appears to be the story of an ordinary woman with an ordinary life. However, upon closer examination this story is anything but ordinary. On the contrary, the four chapters of the book of Ruth paint an inspiring and heartwarming portrait of a woman who is extraordinary! She was so extraordinary, in fact, that she was the great-grandmother of King David and ultimately an ancestress of Jesus Christ!

Ruth's admirable character is demonstrated first in chapter one as we are introduced to Naomi, her mother-in-law, and the tragic loss of Naomi's husband and two sons. Here, amidst this grief, we find one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. After Naomi pleaded with her two daughters-in-law to return to their homelands and families, Ruth responded: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). Can you imagine leaving your own family to go and live with someone that is not your blood relative? Ruth promised to stay with Naomi as long as she lived, and she, like Naomi, would worship Jehovah God rather

than idols (like many did in that day).

The beautiful portrait of Ruth becomes even clearer as we continue reading. Because Ruth and Naomi were widowed, the Law of Moses permitted them to glean (gather "left-over" crops) in fields that belonged to someone else. The inspired writer records that Ruth volunteered to glean grain in the field so that she and Naomi would have food to eat. Even though Ruth was considered a foreigner in this strange land, she felt it her duty to help provide for Naomi and herself. We learn that the field in which Ruth gleaned belonged to a wealthy man named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's late husband. Boaz not only allowed Ruth to glean in his fields, but also offered her additional food, water, and protection.

So what can we learn from the life of Ruth? We have seen in her the kind of loyalty, devotion, humility, service, gratitude, and honor that should characterize every child of God. But one of the most important characteristics was her strong faith in God. Even in tragedy, she remained faithful and chose to follow God. As a foreigner in a strange land, she reaped bountiful blessings because of her faith that God would provide for her. Finally, her faith in God allowed her ultimately to become an ancestress of Jesus Christ.





HANNAH'S PRAYER IS ANSWERED

BETHANY BUTT

Have you ever prayed about something over and over again? God hears and answers our prayers. In the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel, we read a wonderful story about a woman who had her prayers answered by God. Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah. She and Elkanah did not have any children. Hannah wanted to have a child very badly. In fact, she was so sad about not having children that she often cried and would not even eat. Hannah knew that the Lord could help her with her problem, so she asked the Lord to give her a son. If the Lord would give her a son, she promised to give him back to serve the Lord. A priest named Eli was in the temple when Hannah was praying, though at first he didn't know she was praying. When Eli saw her praying, he noticed her lips moving but he could not hear any sound. Eli thought that Hannah was drunk! Soon he realized that Hannah was not drunk but that she was praying, and he gave Hannah very good news. He blessed her so that God would answer her prayers. Hannah was so relieved that she was able to eat again and no

longer felt sad. She believed that the Lord would answer her prayer.

The Lord did answer Hannah's prayer, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, which means "name of God." Just like Hannah had promised, when Samuel was old enough, she took him to Eli and gave him back to the Lord. That must have been a very hard thing for a mother to do. Hannah gave something to the Lord that was very important and special to her. This pleased the Lord, and He rewarded her. The Bible tells us that the Lord blessed Hannah with three sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:21).

From Hannah's example we can learn that it is very important to give God what He deserves. We can also see that when we make sacrifices for God, He will reward us, just like He rewarded His servant Hannah.

Hannah's son Samuel was a faithful servant of the Lord, and God allowed him to anoint the first king of Israel. We can see from the story of Hannah that the Lord hears and answers our prayers.

NAME THE PERSON AND SOLVE THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

Directions: Name the person and solve the hidden message by putting each letter into its proper place (match the numbers).

1. Samuel's mother
 1 16 17 19

2. Her flesh was eaten by dogs
 2 4 5 14

3. Ruth's mother-in-law
 8 12

4. The mother of Jesus
 3 7

5. Esther's cousin and guardian
 32 11 6 18 13

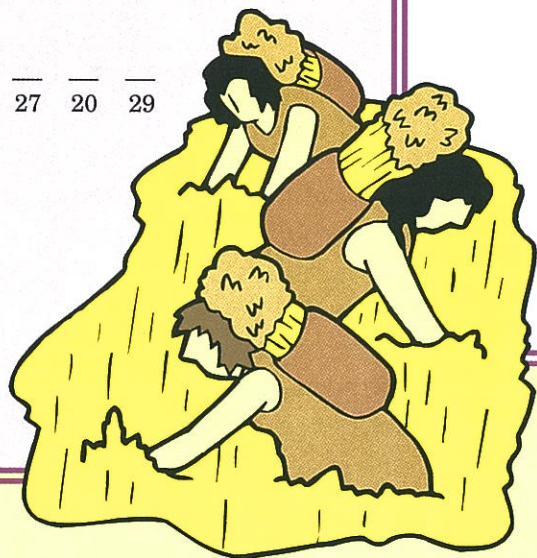
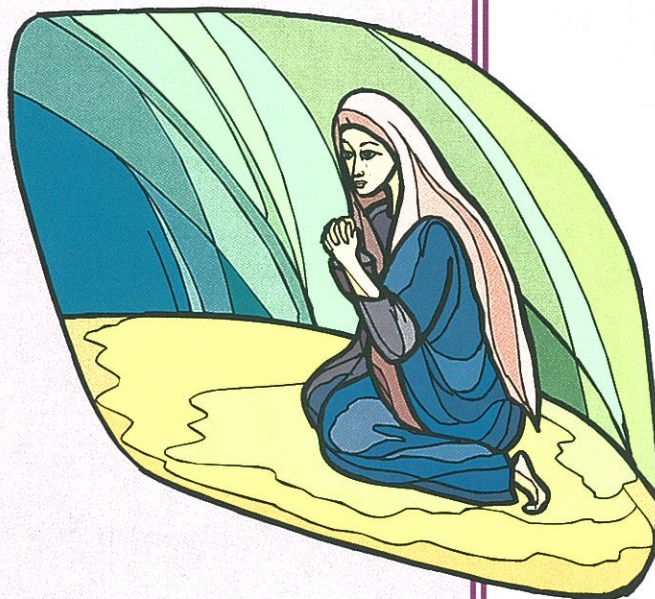
6. This priest saw Hannah in the temple praying
 15 28

7. The great-grandmother of King David
 24 9

8. The angel who told Mary she would have a son
 10 31 27 20 29

9. She was a courageous queen
 23 26 21

10. Hannah's husband
 22 25 33 30



W _ _ _ _ v _ _ _ _ _ , _ w _ _ _ _ ; _ _ _ w _ _ _ v _ _
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

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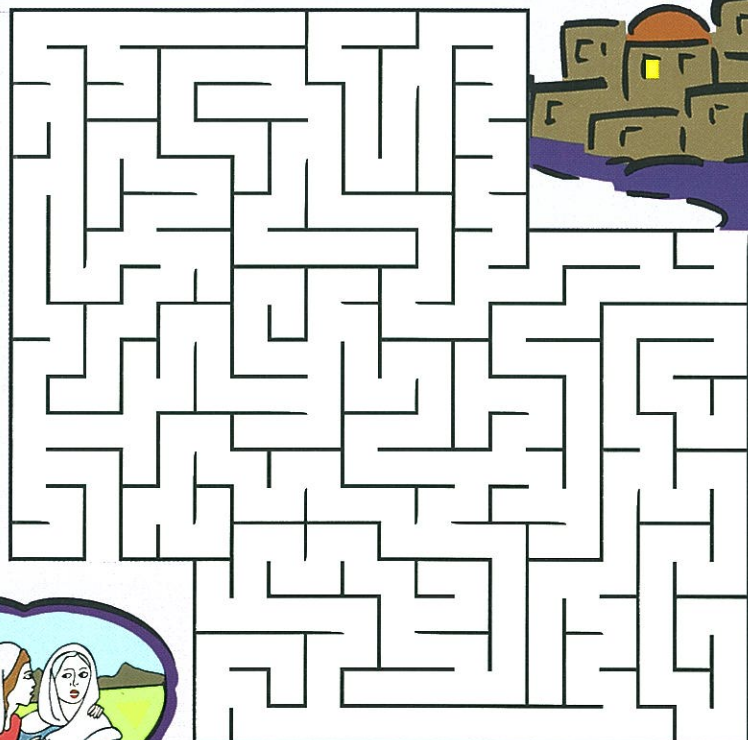
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"Queen Esther"
by Rachel Boitnott,
age 6, Roanoke, VA



TRUE OR FALSE

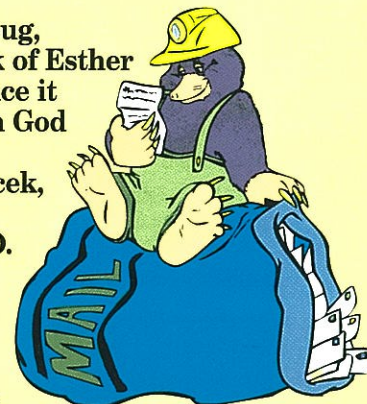
1. T F Mary saw Jesus die on the cross.
2. T F Esther could have been killed for approaching King Ahasuerus without being called.
3. T F Jezebel was a very nice woman.
4. T F Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law.
5. T F The Bible says Hannah had a son named Eli.
6. T F The Bible tells us that Mary, the mother of Jesus, complained often.
7. T F Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah.
8. T F Ruth and Naomi did not get along very well.
9. T F The book of Esther mentions God frequently.
10. T F Hannah prayed to God and asked for a son.



"Help Ruth and Naomi find their way in this foreign land."

Dear Digger Doug,
Why is the book of Esther
in the Bible, since it
doesn't mention God
even once?

Samantha Hajicek,
age 9,
Valley Park, MO.



Dear Samantha,

God works in many different ways. In the book of Exodus, we read about God working through Moses to part the Red Sea and turn a stick into a snake. During the times of the New Testament, God gave Jesus power to heal sickness, raise the dead, and cure blindness.

But miracles were only one way in which God worked; He also works through providence. Providence means that God uses natural laws to accomplish His purposes. For instance, in Acts 14:17 the apostle Paul told his listeners that God gave them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" filling their hearts "with food and gladness." How had God given them food and fruit? Did He miraculously drop apples out of the sky or turn stones to bread? No, God used the natural forces of the world to accomplish His purpose. God is always at work "behind the scenes" to make sure that good defeats evil in the end.

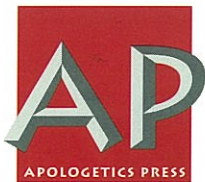
When we read the book of Esther, we never read God's name.

But many of the things that happen in the book could not be "just luck." Take, for instance, the time that King

Ahasuerus could not sleep and his servant "just

happened" to read the records of the time that Mordecai saved the king's life (Esther 6:1-3). In fact, the entire book of Esther shows that God's guiding hand was behind the scenes to save the Jewish nation. Esther's guardian, Mordicai, once said to her: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). His statement shows that he was seeing God's possible plan for Esther.

In your life, you will not be given the power to raise the dead or turn sticks into snakes. But you can know that, even though God does not part the skies and talk directly to you, He is with you every step of the way. The book of Esther reminds us that we do not need to see God (or even read His name) to know that He is "not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).



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JEZEBEL: A Wicked Queen

SHEILA BUTT



Do you know many girls named Jezebel? I didn't think so! And there is a very good reason. Jezebel was the name of an extremely wicked queen in the Old Testament. When King Ahab took her as his wife, we are told that "he went and served Baal and worshipped him" (1 Kings 16: 31).

The Bible tells us that Jezebel massacred (killed) the prophets of God. She especially wanted to kill Elijah, because Elijah had killed the prophets of her false god, Baal. In 1 Kings 21, we learn that Jezebel also had an innocent man killed so that her husband could take the man's vineyard. Jezebel used her influence as King Ahab's wife to cause him to do many bad things.

After that, the prophet Elijah told Ahab that dogs would eat the body of Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:23). When Ahab died, there was a new king of Israel named Jehu who came to the city of Jezreel. He saw Jezebel looking through a window and told the men who were on his side to throw her down from the window. The Bible tells us that her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses. Then Jehu "trampled her underfoot." Later when some men had come to bury her, all they could find was her skull, her feet and the palms of her hands. The prophecy of Elijah had come true! The dogs had eaten the flesh of Jezebel.

In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we read Jezebel's name again. Her name is used to describe another woman who was calling herself a prophetess and causing many people to sin (Revelation 2:20). The Jezebel in the Bible was a murderer who worshipped false gods. She caused her husband to do evil and met a terrible death because of her wickedness.

ANSWERS

ACTIVITY PAGES MAY BE COPIED FOR MULTIPLE STUDENT USE

True or False: 1-T; 2-T; 3-F; 4-T; 5-F; 6-F; 7-T; 8-F; 9-F; 10-T; Name and Solve: 1-Hannah; 2-Jezebel; 3-Naomi; 4-Mary; 5-Mordecai; 6-Eli; 7-Ruth; 8-Gabriel; 9-Esther; 10-Elkanah; Hidden Message: "Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16)

Cover: Esther by J. William Myers

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