



# Faith & Fortitude

## Women of the Old Testament

PART 2

*We can emulate the Christlike traits of devoted women of the Old Testament.*

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**A**s we consider the extraordinary lives of some of the women mentioned in the Old Testament, we can discover ways in which the characteristics and values that guided their actions have relevance for our day. Following are brief life sketches of six of these women, along with suggested lessons and applications. (Part 1 of this article appeared in the March 2014 *Ensign* and highlighted the lives of six other Old Testament women.)

# Loyalty

## Ruth and Naomi

Ruth, a Moabite, was the ancestress of King David and Jesus Christ.

Naomi, Ruth's future mother-in-law, and her family journeyed to Moab because of famine in their homeland of Bethlehem. Naomi's husband died, and her two sons married Moabite women, one of which was Ruth. Sometime later, both of Naomi's sons died.

Bereft, Naomi set out, accompanied by her daughters-in-law, to return to Bethlehem, having received news that the famine was over. Along the way, Naomi told her daughters-in-law to return to their families. This she did out of her love for them, likely in hopes that they would find husbands in their own land. (See Ruth 1:8–9.) However, both daughters-in-law loved Naomi and did not want to leave her (see Ruth 1:10). Eventually, one of the daughters-in-law was persuaded to go back, but Ruth, who converted to the Israelite faith, was determined to stay with Naomi, saying, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Naomi rewarded Ruth's kindness and devotion by helping her marry Boaz, a good man and a relative of Naomi's late husband. Ruth and Boaz had a son, Obed, the future grandfather of King David. Kinswomen told Naomi how greatly the Lord had blessed her by giving her Ruth, who deeply loved her, and a grandson (see Ruth 4:14–17).

### LESSONS

- Treating others with love and kindness helps them see the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in our lives and can help them gain a testimony.
- As we are faithful and patient, losses we experience will be made up by the Lord according to His timing.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Plan a family home evening to discuss ways my family can show more love and kindness to a family member, friend, or neighbor.
- Ponder ways I can strengthen my faith in the Lord's ability, according to His timing, to make up for any losses I experience in this life.

Loyalty

Virtue

Charity

Faith

Purity

Patience

## Widow of Zarephath

The widow of Zarephath, a Gentile, was a woman of great faith who is not identified by name in the scriptures.

During a severe drought and subsequent famine brought on by the people's rebellion toward the Lord, the Lord instructed the prophet Elijah to travel to a widow's home in Zarephath. The Lord told Elijah that He had commanded her to feed Elijah. (See 1 Kings 17:9.) When Elijah approached, the poor widow was preparing to feed herself and her son the last bit of her meager food. Elijah promised her that if she fed him first, her food would last until the famine was over. The widow immediately complied. Just as Elijah promised, her food did last, sufficient to feed not only the widow's family but also Elijah until the famine was over. (See 1 Kings 17:12–16.)

Sometime later, when the widow's son fell sick and died, Elijah restored him to life (see 1 Kings 17:17–23). The widow bore testimony that she knew without a doubt that Elijah was a prophet (see 1 Kings 17:24).



### LESSONS

- Acting on counsel from the Lord's prophets can require much faith.
- Unhesitatingly obeying the Lord's prophets can bring great blessings into our lives.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Assess my response to prophetic counsel and set goals to regularly review the words of the living prophets.
- Plan a family home evening to discuss the faith and obedience of the widow of Zarephath and the blessings she received.

Faith

Service

Trust

Obedience

Kindness

Selflessness

# Humility

## The Shunammite Woman

The Shunammite woman, another unnamed sister in the scriptures, was blessed by Elisha for her service to him in a manner similar to Elijah's blessing of the widow of Zarephath.

The Shunammite was a wealthy Israelite woman who was married and childless when she began serving Elisha, providing him sustenance when he traveled through the city. She and her husband even had a special room built onto their house for Elisha to use during his travels.

A grateful Elisha asked her what he could do for her. Apparently humbly satisfied with her life and circumstances, she asked for nothing. Elisha's servant, however, pointed out to Elisha that the Shunammite woman was childless, so Elisha promised her a child that would be born within a year. She responded with cautious disbelief, but as promised, she bore a son. When her son was grown, he became ill and died. The Shunammite woman immediately went to get Elisha, who came to her home and restored her son to life. (See 2 Kings 4:8–37.)

A few years later, Elisha warned the Shunammite woman to take her family to another land to avoid a lengthy famine. The faithful family immediately obeyed, leaving their home and their land. Through their obedience to the prophet, not only was the family preserved but their home and their lands were restored to them when the famine was over. (See 2 Kings 8:1–6.)

### LESSONS

- Unselfish service brings great blessings into our lives.
- When we have a testimony of the divine calling of prophets, we obey their counsel faithfully and experience the blessings of so doing.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Reflect on blessings I have seen in my life as a result of my own service. Are there ways I can better serve my friends and family or those I do not know?
- Evaluate the strength of my testimony of the divine calling of prophets and how quick I am to obey their counsel.

Humility

Gratitude

Obedience

Thoughtfulness

Service

Faithfulness

## Hannah

Hannah, wife of Elkanah and the mother of the great prophet Samuel, experienced the trial of barrenness, since “the Lord had shut up her womb” (1 Samuel 1:6). This caused Hannah great sorrow. Her husband loved her but did not understand her sorrow, and her husband’s other wife taunted Hannah for her childlessness. Even the high priest, Eli, rebuked her, assuming she was drunk when he saw her praying silently but with great “bitterness of soul” in the temple to the Lord for a child (see 1 Samuel 1:9–14). Hannah meekly explained to Eli that she had only been pouring out her soul to the Lord. Eli’s inspired response was, “Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition” (1 Samuel 1:17).

Hannah bore Samuel, and to fulfill the covenant she had made to dedicate him to the Lord (see 1 Samuel 1:11), she took Samuel to the temple as soon as he was weaned. Hannah’s song of joy (see 1 Samuel 2:1–10) shows her joy as a result of putting her trust in the Lord and the depth of her testimony of the Savior.

In succeeding years, Hannah was blessed to give birth to five more children (see 1 Samuel 2:21).

### LESSONS

- The Lord always hears our prayers and answers them in the way and the time that He knows is best for us.
- “All things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory” (D&C 98:3).



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Think about my own feelings as I pray sincerely for the desires of my heart. Do I have unfailing faith and trust that the Lord will hear and answer my prayers?
- Consider how I handle my own trials. How can I strengthen my faith to wait humbly and patiently to see the great blessings that can come from them?

Hope

Motherhood

Prayerfulness

Long-suffering

Sacrifice

Joy

# Sacrifice

## Esther

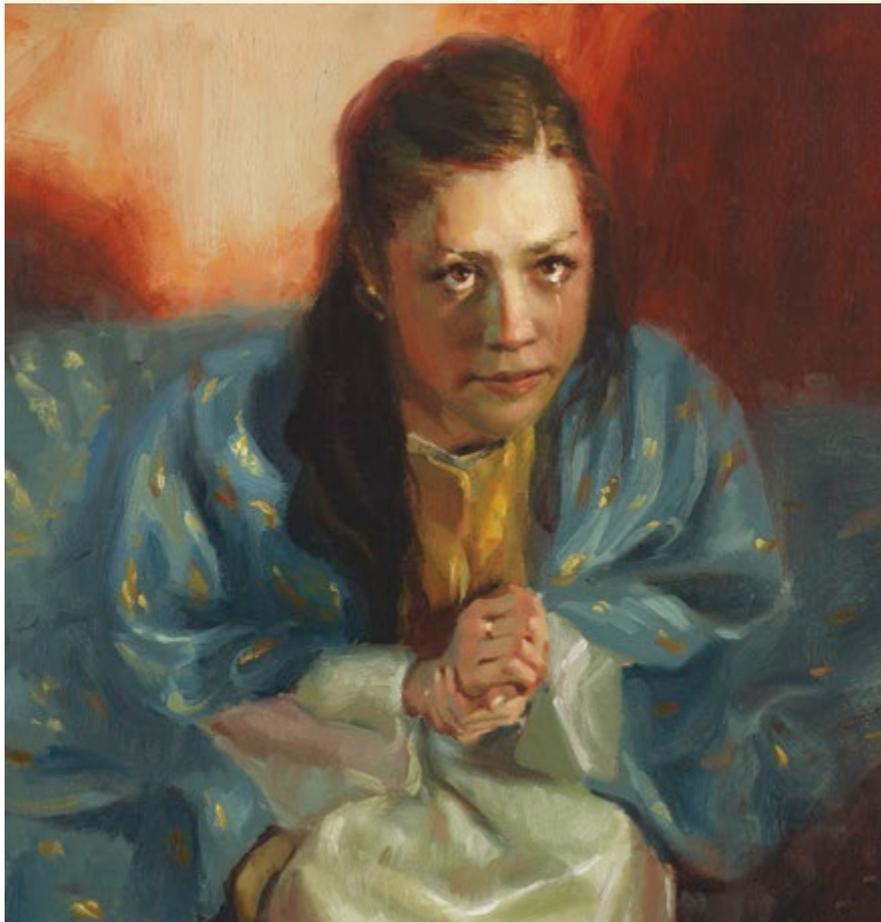
Esther was the cousin and adopted daughter of Mordecai, a Jew who worked for the Persian king Ahasuerus. After the king removed his queen for disobedience to him, he chose Esther to be his new queen, not knowing she was Jewish. A jealous adviser, Haman, connived to destroy the Jews, and a decree was sent throughout the country that all Jews were to be killed. Mordecai counseled Esther to approach the king and request protection for her people, reasoning, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Unless summoned to see the king, anyone approaching him could be put to death. Esther fasted and prayed for three days, as did the other Jews. She then stood where the king could see her. He gave her permission to approach him, telling her that he would give her anything she asked, “to the half of the kingdom” (Esther 5:3).

Esther simply asked the king if she could prepare a feast for him. During the feast the king repeated his promise to her. Esther asked to prepare another feast, at which she petitioned the king to reverse the decree and named the person responsible for it—Haman. The king reversed the decree and had Haman killed. The Jews were saved, and Mordecai was promoted to second in command in the kingdom (see Esther 10).

## LESSONS

- Fasting with faith and a purpose, along with prayer, blesses us and others for whom we are calling upon the Lord.
- We all have important missions to fulfill in mortality. Being righteous, obedient, and courageous ensures that the Lord will help us to be successful.



## WHAT CAN I DO?

- Consider how faith-filled and purposeful my own fasting is. Can I exercise more faith when I fast?
- Read and ponder my patriarchal blessing often to remind me of my own mission in mortality. ■

Sacrifice

Loyalty

Courage

Prayerfulness

Meekness

Determination