

# Women of the Bible









## Introduction

The following unit has been written for the upper grades; however, it may be modified to be used in the middle grades. The approach is a "multiple intelligence" one. You will find biography sketches of six biblical women. Following each sketch, an MI lesson plan is given. The unit could be easily used over several weeks.

	OUTLINE
Eve	
Dorcas	
Lydia	
Priscilla	
Miriam	
Esther	
Activities:	Poetic License
	God's Honor Roll
	Bible Heroines or Not
	And be sure your sin will find you out
	Musical Opportunity
Key	
Bibliography	

Written by Martha Ban and Denise Michaelis





#### Eve: From Sorrow to Joy

Read Genesis 4: 1-26 and The Bible Story, by Arthur S. Maxwell, Volume 1, pages 61-72

"God has given me another child instead of Abel, who Cain killed," said Eve, the wife of Adam, when their last son named Seth was born. Eve's sorrow, the text implies, was her testing time. Amid her grief over the loss of her most promising son, Abel, and the cursed hope in her wayward son, Cain, she must have suffered poignant heartaches. It is easy to believe that Eve, like all mothers during periods of family tragedy, learned to turn to God for comfort. He was her fortress and strength, or she could not have spoken so joyfully when Seth was born.

Her buoyant reaction suggests that after Seth's birth she gained a new perspective and that she was to know, as Job later learned, that God is just and that He does not fail those who serve and patiently wait on him. A sorrowing mother like Eve was sure to learn also that God never lets us grieve for long. Her family is typical of the human family at its worst and at its best. All of us, like Eve, live in and out of the Lord's presence. Eve first left God's presence when the serpent tempted her to eat of the forbidden fruit and when she influenced Adam to do the same.

The life pattern of Eve and her family, briefly described in the Bible, follows the cycle of family living. Eve is first described as young and beautiful, living in a lush garden where she had begun her life. Then after giving in to temptation, she is seen amid the tragedies of motherhood. She no doubt sought God in order to overcome her sorrow after her farewell to Cain, a murderer who went out from the presence of the Lord. The latter part of Eve's story reminds us of Jesus' farewell address to his disciples: "So you have sorrow now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." John 16:22.



In her affliction Eve was typical of mothers as a whole. Although terribly grieved over the evil in Cain, she learned, just as we must learn, to draw nearer to God, who loves us and who opens new doors when others close. Eve's new door opened upon Seth, who was followed by a godly generation. That we know, for "at that time men began to call upon the name of Lord." Genesis 4:26.

Eve was filled with joy once again. Her tragedies and subsequent spiritual renewal assure us that the Lord will deliver us from the heartaches of tragedy and sorrow if we diligently seek him and then strive to do his will. We can infer that Eve, a woman, brought forth in God's image, had the wisdom to know that God created her womanly being, and through Him she learned the wonder of parenthood, and that God ordained for her life an unending pattern of spiritual truths. She was far-sighted enough to draw nearer to God in all of His wonder. Toward the end of her life, she also grew in wisdom and love for God, her Creator.

"Wisdom was first of all created things: intelligent purpose has been there from the beginning." Ecclesiastes 1:4-5



Topic: Eve

#### Grade(s): 7-8

Lesson Objectives: Students list the positive attributes of Eve

**Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Eve

#### **Preparation:**

Poster board Construction paper Various Bible verses

CD player and headphones Haydn's Creation





#### Dorcas

Read: Acts 9:36, 37 and The Bible Story, by Arthur S. Maxwell, Volume 10, pages 47-51

"If a brother or sister is ill and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith, by itself, if it has not works, is dead." James 2:15-17

In the early New Testament church, a woman named Dorcas not only gave of herself to others, but in her daily life was an example to all believers that miracles abound among practicing Christians, even when it appears that both good works and miracles go unrecognized. When Dorcas was raised from the dead by Peter, those to whom she had given so much, crowded around her. Among those were concerned widows, wearing coats and garments she had made for them. They were ecstatic when they saw her arise and walk forth well and whole again. What she had shared with them has so realistically met their daily needs that they loved her devotedly. And when she was resurrected from the dead, they were so filled with wonder that they and many other "believed in the Lord."

In Dorcas we see two important patterns for daily living, giving and believing. Too often each is pushed aside for a lesser accomplishment-a limited social success or a high office in a mediocre organization. Yet the example of Dorcas has survived the centuries. Her endeavors apply to men and women of every age. No doubt she had moments when she thought her life and example had little meaning beyond a few small kindnesses. But after almost two thousand years, Dorcas continues to inspire us with a knowledge of what real service and unselfish giving can mean. If we give what we have, whether it be money or service or kind words, our lives reach into the infinite, and we suddenly discover God in all His mystery.

Kahil Gibran in his essay "On Giving," writes:

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. For what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow?

Dorcas did not wait until tomorrow to give to others. Each day she served the needy with all she had. She served them with hands that stitched deftly, with a caring spirit that understood their needs, and with warmth of understanding that drew others to her in a bond of love.

As we learn to serve others, we are taken beyond our own small selves. We begin to see God moving through our lives in wondrous ways, enriching our concept of his universe. Suddenly the selfish pursuits that once shut us in vanish as if they never existed. We learn to believe in wonders, even when outer circumstances may not justify that belief.





**Topic:** Dorcas

**Preparation:** 

Grade(s) 7-8

**Lesson Objectives:** Students list the positive attributes of Dorcas.

**Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Dorcas.





# Lydia The First Christian Convert or A Christian Professional Woman

Lydia almost always dressed in purple. It became her, but it was also good business. She was a seller of purple dye. This dye came from the secretion that ran clear and white through the veins of a certain mollusk but which, when exposed to the sun, turned suddenly from deep purple to crimson, and made a permanent, strong dye for fabrics. Knowledge of dyemaking was traditional in Lydia's family.

As a successful business woman, Lydia left her home in Thyatira when her husband died and moved Philippa in Macedonia (Europe). Here she was greatly respected and loved by her friends and business associates. In spite of her professional success and popularity, however, Lydia must have been sensitively aware of a lack in her personal life. She was a Gentile, but in 50 A.D., she had become a part of a small group of Jewish women who met together to worship the God of Abraham. Lydia came to believe in Him as the true God. Her home was large and comfortable, but perhaps because members of her Gentile family objected, or because Lydia herself still felt some hesitancy about being publicly associated with those who worship the true God, the little group met outside the gates of Philippi to study the ancient Scriptures and to pray to God.

They had never heard of Jesus Christ, but God heard their prayers. Paul, then in Troas, had a vision in which he felt called to go into Macedonia with the Gospel of Christ. Luke sailed with him and they went straight to Philippi where Lydia lived. Learning of this group of devout women who met on the banks of the river outside the city, Paul, Luke, and Silas went there directly and found the women eager and open to the message of the risen Lord. Their hearts were well prepared to believe. Lydia and most of her group of Jewish friends



welcomed the news that the Messiah had come. Paul baptized them immediately in the little river, and Lydia insisted that Paul and his friends come to her large, spacious house in the city. Her home became the meeting place of a growing group of followers of the risen Lord. Paul taught them and prayed with them there regularly.

One day when Paul and Silas were on their way to Lydia's home for a prayer meeting, Paul cast out a demon from a young girl, whose occult powers had been a good source of income for a group of Philippian men. The men became so angered that they had Paul and Silas arrested, flogged, and thrown into jail for causing a public disturbance. As the two followers prayed and praised the Lord in prison, an earthquake brought about not only their release, but the conversion of the jailer and his family. As soon as Paul and Silas were outside, they went straight to Lydia's house to rejoice with the other Christians gathered there in prayer for their safety. A big group rejoiced greatly that night because now their number had grown to include many husbands and sons and brothers.

Lydia continued her business activities, but the center of her life was the indwelling Presence of the same Lord who had filled the lives of those who waited with His mother and His brothers that day in the upper room in Jerusalem.





**Preparation:** 

Paper Hymnal

Topic: Lydia

Grade(s): 7-8

**Lesson Objectives:** Students list the positive attributes of Lydia.

**Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting, students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Lydia.







# Priscilla A Woman Who Dared To Use Her Mind

Read: Acts 18: 2, 18, 28; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16: 19; 2 Timothy 4:19 and *The Bible Story*, by Arthur S. Maxwell, Volume 10, pages 95, 96.

About six months after Paul left Lydia and her friends in the new church at Philippi, he began another deep friendship which carried him through many difficulties with the new churches at both Ephesus and Corinth. Paul had much in common with Priscilla, a Jewess from Rome. and her husband, Aquila, both converts to Jesus Christ. Like Paul, both Priscilla and Aquila were skilled tent makers. Paul not only founded the church at Corinth in their home, but he lived there. Hour after hour. Paul sat with his two friends, as they wove goat's hair into narrow strips of dark brown or black cloth, to be sewn together into tents. With Priscilla especially, Paul carried on stimulating discussions of the deep things of God, as their handmade wooden looms slipped the coarse thread back and forth. Priscilla sewed deftly and fast, and her quick mind probed Paul's fine store of knowledge of the Scriptures of God in Jesus Christ. She was a scholar and studied and learned with a humility as profound as her intellect.

Priscilla became a beloved leader of God's many people in Corinth. However, when Paul sailed for Ephesus, both Priscilla and Aquila sailed with him. Later, Paul left his two friends in charge of the church in Ephesus. Here, Priscilla and Aquila were busy as always, weaving their tent cloth and greeting and teaching the Christians who made their house once more their meeting place. Priscilla continued to be instrumental in the spreading of God's word.

Since men always held the honored place in society during Priscilla's time, it is unique that

in the Bible, her name is usually mentioned before her husband's name. However, she was no domineering woman. Priscilla, Paul's dear friend, was God's dear friend also. She dared to use her



good mind, but she used it in total submission to God—who held the central place in her creative and fruitful life. In a period when women were not encouraged to use their minds, she was not afraid to use hers. There is no indication that she ever misused it by either conceit or domination. Priscilla let the mind of Christ be in her, as her good friend Paul urged her to do. When she taught the Gospel of Christ, she lived it at the very moment the words poured from her mouth. She slammed no doors in anyone's face because she "had it all straight."

Priscilla lives on as one of the wisest and most knowledgeable women of the early church. She was active in small groups at Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome and taught in her own Church of the Household at both Ephesus and Corinth. A church was named for her on the Aventine Hill in Rome. Priscilla probably had few handwritten scrolls, if any, to work with; yet she possessed so much, including a close friendship with Paul, through whom she gained a deeper understanding of Christ himself.





Topic: Priscilla

**Preparation:** 

Grade(s): 7-8

**Construction Paper** 

**Lesson Objectives:** Students list the positive attributes of Priscilla **Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Priscilla



# Miriam A Liberated Woman



Read: Exodus 15:20-21; Numbers 12:1-16 and *The Bible Story*, by Arthur S. Maxwell, Volume 2, pages 80-86, 138; Volume 3, pages 21-25.

Miriam, the devoted distinguished sister of Moses, stood in the lead of liberated women in ancient times when she, along with Moses and her brother Aaron, led the community of Israel out of centuries of Egyptian bondage. As they crossed the Red Sea, its surging waters miraculously parted and then closed in on the pharaoh, following behind with his chariots and horsemen.

Miriam was young and full of the spirit of God. On the bank of the Red Sea, she danced and sang "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea." (Genesis 15:21)

Miriam inspired the other women of Israel with her joyous spirit. Free at last from the long oppression of the unjust pharaohs, Miriam signified a new kind of liberation for women. Her leadership marked the beginning of Israel's heroic age, when women as well as men rose up to declare their freedom. Miriam sensed a renewal of mind and spirit in the great victory she shared with her brothers. This triumph established her role as one of Israel's noble women.

Several decades later, Miriam's personality took a strange twist. She disapproved of Moses' marriage to a Cushite (Ethiopian), probably a black woman. Miriam, who had shown such love for Moses when he was a baby and when as a young man he led his people to victory, began to rebuke him publicly. Her reaction completely contradicted her earlier support of Moses when he led Israel across the Red Sea, when he talked with God on Mount Sinai, or when he set up Israel's first civil and religious laws. Miriam then looked up to her brother as the honored leader of Israel. When she reproached him and attempted to become the arbiter of his personal affairs, she jeopardized his authority over Israel. "Has the Lord indeed only spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us (she and Aaron) also?" Numbers 12:2, Miriam asked.

After a personal encounter with God, Moses and Aaron pondered God's words; "My servant Moses is entrusted with all My house. With him I speak clearly. Why then were you not afraid to speak against him?" God questioned Aaron as well as Miriam, for Aaron had been co-partner in criticizing Moses. After this Miriam was stricken with leprosy, but she was to learn again, as she had at the Red Sea, that God is not a God of wrath but a God of love.

Later Miriam was healed. In her suffering she probably realized that she had been unloving and unwise in her actions toward Moses and that she was more arrogant than credible when she put herself ahead of the Lord before whom Moses had drawn so close at Mount Sinai. Her new perception probably helped her to see that she was in bondage to herself or she would not have looked to place Moses in bondage to her. Actually she put herself down when she tried to put her brother down. She knew she must draw close to God, as she had been when she and her people had sung so joyfully: "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation: this is my God, and I will praise, my father's God and I will exalt him." Exodus 15:1-2.

In the last part of her life Miriam became selfish, complacent, fearful, and unloving toward Moses. She who had known bondage, then liberty, then God's abundance, re-entered bondage. Gone were the spiritual faith, courage, and freedom that had made her a young heroine of Israel. The wonder of the Bible is that Miriam continues to serve as a model to contemporary men and women, both in her achievements and in her failures. Her sudden fall reminds us that we have to guard our thoughts constantly, or we too can be in bondage before we know it, not only to ourselves but to our careers, debts, possessions, and sometimes pursuits that lead us away from God. Miriam did not find real fulfillment in her later life. And neither will we unless we have learned to live apart from self and for others, and have served our community, nation, and family.



Topic: Miriam

Grade(s): 7-8

**Lesson Objectives:** Students list the positive attributes of Miriam.

**Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Miriam.



Paper Tambourine

**Preparation:** 







# Esther Queenly Self-Denial

Read: Esther and Etta B. Deggering My Bible Friends

Because she was chosen the most "beautiful and lovable" among the young girls in 127 provinces in an empire stretching from India to Ethiopia, Esther, a poor, unknown Jewish girl, became the wife of King Ahasuerus, emperor of a vast Media-Persian empire. And she sat on the royal throne with the King in Susa, the capital. Her foster father, Mordecai, also her cousin, inspired her to believe that she had a tremendous opportunity for good during this time when her Jewish people were being severely persecuted. Mordecai knew that all the Jews in Persia might be annihilated by Haman, the wicked prime minister and the king's favorite. "Think not that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews," Mordecai warned Esther. "For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews...and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such as this?" Esther 4:13-14.

Even though the stakes were high, Esther courageously declared, "Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." First she prepared a banquet honoring the king and Haman and in the presence of both of them, she humbly declared, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request, For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed,...If we had been sold merely as slaves,...I would have held my peace."

Then Ahasuerus asked Esther, "Who is he, and where is he?"

And Esther answered "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!"



Finally, Haman was the one annihilated, and the "Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor" again.

Queen Esther was such a catalyst for good that she seemed to have been born for such a time as this. She accepted the responsibility out of love for her people, even if it meant she would die with them. In nobly accepting her destiny as protector of her people, Esther took a stand that could have meant not only the loss of her place as queen but her death. Fate was against her because Haman had offered a huge sum to the king if he would purge and destroy the Jewish people. The power of Haman vanished soon after Esther pled before the king, and Haman was hung.

Although Esther lived at a time of intense hatred and revenge, and although she is guilty of racial intolerance herself, she did save her people from annihilation. Powerful though her husband was and young though she was, she encouraged him to see that he who rules must be just. In his great love for her, he conceded to her wishes. In a sense Esther was another Deborah. She also exhibited the spirit of the early martyrs and saints, who were willing to die for what they believed right. Esther had the courage to cut away at the roots of evil. She arose to defend her people without hesitation and without thought of herself.





**Topic:** Esther

Grade(s): 7-8

**Lesson Objectives:** Students list the positive attributes of Esther.

**Learner Outcomes:** Given MI setting students draw, write, verbally explain and act out, the positive attributes of Esther.

#### **Preparation:**

Four + Bible versions CD player and headphones Handel's Queen of Sheba







## Poetic License

#### Miriam

Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women took their tambourines and danced in celebration. And Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea." Exodus 15:20, 21

\*\* Choose two other females from the Bible. Create a poem describing each one. Others should be able to identify your person by reading your poem. Illustrate your poems.





#### God's Honor Roll of Women

Sarah— Who believed God would give her a son despite her age and the impossibility of her situation. Shiprah and Pual—Two brave women who revered God and courageously defied Pharaoh's orders Jochebed—Who trusted God with her child's life. Rahab—Who received God's forgiveness and was taken into the lineage of Jesus Ruth—A faithful, foreign-born daughter-in-law, who became an ancestress of Jesus Hannah—Who believed God for a child Eunice and Lois—Who taught a young man their Faith

Finish the honor roll. Give the reasons why the following six women should be on the Honor Roll.

Eve-	
Dorcas-	
Lydia-	 
Priscilla-	
Miriam-	
Esther-	



# Bible Heroines or Not...

Directions: There are 35 names of women hidden in the word search below. Find them. Use your Bible or other reference books for help if you need.

В	E	L	Ι	S	А	В	Е	Т	Н	J	E	V	Е	0
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H	А	N	N	А	Η	D	E	В	0	R	А	Н	Η	E
S	А	R	А	Н	А	В	Ι	E	U	N	Ι	С	E	R
H	А	G	А	Н	E	V	K	А	R	М	D	S	R	0
E	Ι	Р	А	L	Q	Ζ	J	0	С	Н	А	В	E	D
B	М	F	Р	R	Ι	S	С	Ι	L	L	А	R	Η	Ι
A	М	Ι	С	Н	А	L	Р	S	0	Ι	А	E	Y	А
В	А	W	R	K	Ι	Y	Ι	М	W	С	В	В	D	S
X	R	G	Η	0	U	R	E	0	Η	Н	Ι	E	Р	W
K	Т	Y	Ι	А	А	S	А	E	Z	Х	G	K	J	E
Р	Η	E	В	E	N	М	L	Ι	L	Р	А	А	С	Х
H	А	R	0	Р	Р	Ι	Z	V	E	R	Ι	Н	N	Z
X	Х	S	А	С	R	0	D	E	L	Ι	L	А	Η	0



#### Bible Heroines or Not...

Directions: There are 35 names of women hidden in the word search below. Find them. Use your Bible or other reference books for help if you need.





#### "...And be sure your sin will find you out." Numbers 32:23

Consider the following women from the Bible. Sort them into two categories based on their influence—positive or negative. Give a brief explanation for your classification.

Lydia, Dorcas, Eve, Miriam, Priscilla, Rahab, Esther, Deborah, Hannah, Rebekah, Ruth, Mary, Martha, Rachel, Leah, Dinah, Jochebed, Zipporah, Delilah, Sarah, Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba, Jezebel, Huldah, Athaliah, Elisabeth, Anna, Herodias, Salome, Sapphira, Phoebe, Eunice, Lois, Hagar





# "...And be sure your sin will find you out." Numbers 32:23

<u>NEGATIVE</u>	EXPLANATION FOR CHOICE
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### Musical opportunity

Use your musical talent-known or unknown. Compose a melody and set one of the poems you wrote in "Poetic License" to music





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