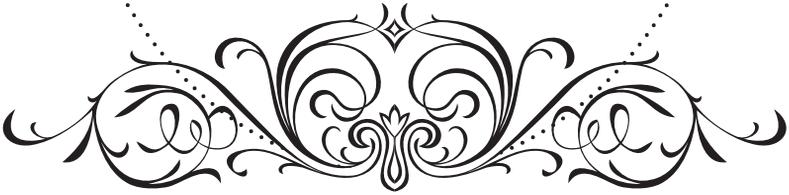


This book belongs to

... A WOMAN AFTER
GOD'S OWN *heart*



women

at the cross

Discovering the Work of the Cross in the Lives of
12 Women of the Bible - for Today's Woman

Mary Ellen Beachy

Women at the Cross

Mary Ellen Beachy

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Dedicated

TO MY DAUGHTERS

Mary Lynita and Margretta Joy

Only a mother knows
How much she delights
In the life of her daughter,
Rejoices in her fresh young beauty,
Tries diligently to teach her
The skills she needs to be of service
And a blessing wherever she goes in life.
Oh yes, you, my daughter,
Are very, very precious;
I want you to know,
Whatever you do,
Wherever you go,
I will always pray for you;
I will always love you.

May God bless you,
May God keep you.
Always embrace the Cross of Christ
And live joyfully for Jesus,
Our King of Kings
And Lord of Lords.

Acknowledgments

To God

be all the glory for inspiration and ideas.

My husband

Mark, for his faithful love and support.

My daughters

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My sons

Matthias: He could quickly help me figure out computer things, organize files, etc. Thanks!

Marcellus, Markus, and Micah: They make good writing material and keep our home lively.

I thank God for my own dear family.

My friends

Dianna, Delight, Faith, Ann, Sharon, Darlene, Ruby, and Miriam: Thank you for taking time to share your inspiring stories.

Foreword

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene” (John 19:25).

This book is about women who came to the Cross, and continue daily to come to find purpose and meaning in life. My purpose for this book is to encourage ordinary women like myself.

- To search the Scriptures and see the dedication of godly women and the difference they made in the lives of their families and others in Bible times.
- To do your ordinary work “as unto the Lord,” offering up yourself as a living daily sacrifice for Jesus.
- To be encouraged with the lives of men and women who lived their days with the passionate purpose to please the Lord.

Life is filled with many ordinary days and mountains of mundane work. There are spiritual battles for each woman of God.

Unless we meet Jesus at the Cross we are not ready to meet the challenges of life. The Cross of Jesus Christ is either our comfort or our condemnation. The Cross of Jesus Christ is our salvation. We must know the Lord of the Cross!!

The first part of each chapter is about a woman from the Bible. Then down-to-earth lessons to learn from her, and experiences from my life and the lives of others who have embraced the “Way of the Cross.”

The story at the end of each chapter is about contemporary women whose lives are worthy to learn from and emulate.

Mary Ellen Beachy

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CHAPTER ONE



Blameless and Barren

Elizabeth was a woman of a beautiful spirit; one who did not become bitter through the crushing disappointment of month after month, year after year of barrenness. She was faithful in ordinary days and sought God in all her ways. She chose to be grateful for the blessings that were hers.

Her life and home were peacefully quiet—too quiet. In years gone by, her intense heart’s desire was to be blessed by God with children. How she had yearned for a son; not just one, but many sons and daughters. Tears—warm, wet tears—spilled down her cheeks. “Lord,” she prayed, “I don’t understand, but whatever You have for me, I want to embrace Your will.”

More years went by, and still their home was silent. No sweet patter of lively feet, no joyous music of childish laughter and prattle. There was no small child to love and diligently teach for Jehovah God.

Elizabeth could not fathom why God would not answer her cries for a child. Her Jewish culture viewed fruitfulness as a great blessing and barrenness as a momentous reproach. A barren woman was often concluded to be guilty of some weighty sin, and therefore, Elizabeth suffered.

Through all the unfulfilled dreams, through the yearnings when she saw other women holding babies to their breasts,

through all the rejection and whisperings, Elizabeth continued walking with God. Her utmost heart's desire was to do God's holy will. The passing of many years found her with a gentle radiance and a sweet spirit that permeated her life and blessed those she knew.

Her comfort and solace was God and His Holy Word. She learned to cast her burdens upon the Lord and He sustained her (Psalm 55:22).

Her other great comfort was her husband, Zacharias. Luke 1:6 says, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Theirs was an enviable testimony. Together, they sought God and served Him. They were dedicated, devoted, and diligent as they daily walked with God. Theirs was not just a Sunday religion. They lived honestly before God and man, equitable in character.

They were devoted to God, even though these were dark days in Israel. Truly, the scepter had departed from Judah. For the first time, the throne was filled by a non-Jew. They were enslaved by the Romans. Herod the Great, though an able ruler, was brutally ruthless and cruel. Even Jehovah God had been silent in Palestine for four hundred dark years.

In the midst of all this darkness, the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth shone like glowing candles. They clung to their faith in God. They had grown old, but they had not grown bitter and cynical.

Little did Zacharias and Elizabeth know that Jehovah God was about to bless their lives with an astounding, amazing surprise—a miracle that would be a blessing of joy and gladness to their home, and to countless others.

Their dreams for a son were dead, for Elizabeth was now past child-bearing age. Yet, God knew their home was ready to raise a man for Him. Their holy living, faithfulness, and fervent prayers had prepared them to be used by God. To accomplish His work in His perfect timing, God would perform a miracle.

YOUR PRAYERS ARE HEARD

On that eventful day, Zacharias was responsible to attend to the burning of incense in the temple. The priests offered the burnt offerings and the incense offering simultaneously every day. Incense was an emblem of the prayers and praise of the people of God. The smoke of the incense mingled with the smoke of the sacrifice.

The time spent in burning incense was likely thirty minutes, during which the people maintained a reverent, profound silence as they prayed. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the people were ascending up to God. They were praying, pleading, and imploring God to remember them and send the Messiah.

What a perfect time for the angel to come with the wondrous message for Zacharias. But Zacharias was startled and filled with fear at the presence of the angel on the right side of the altar of incense. God did not leave him troubled, for the angel said, "Fear not, Zacharias, thy prayer is heard. Your wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son. Thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. Thou shalt call his name John. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:13-17).

God had spoken! The four hundred years of silence were broken! "Zacharias, your prayers are heard; the long-awaited answer is here at last. Your prayers for a son, your prayers for the deliverance and consolation of Israel, your prayers and pleadings, they are all heard!" Unfortunately, Zacharias doubted the angel's words. "How can this be?" he questioned, "for my wife and I are now old."

The angel spoke again, saying, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season" (Luke 1:19, 20).

ELIZABETH'S RESPONSE

In your mind's eye, picture a man who could not speak, writing such a life-changing message to the woman he loved. "Elizabeth, an angel spoke to me. God is going to give us a son!"

What was her response? "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me," she exclaimed, "to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25).

Elizabeth rejoiced at the wonderful news. She was filled with the Spirit of God; her focus was on God. She had an overwhelming sense of gratitude and praise, rather than the spirit of grievance. She did not focus on why this did not take place many years before.

After she conceived the child, she went into seclusion for five months. Imagine the silence. Who did she talk with when her husband couldn't talk? I believe she spent much time in prayer, conversing with God, and seeking God's will in His Word.

Elizabeth lived up to her lovely name which means, "God is my oath" or "a worshiper of God." She did what each godly woman needs to do, and wants to do. She sought God for wisdom to teach and train the special child God would give to them.

One day, there was a knock at Elizabeth's door. God sent to her house a golden blessing, a lovely maiden to brighten and bless the last three months of her pregnancy.

Is your situation today similar to Elizabeth's? Your arms are empty and you yearn for and pray for a child?

Or are you already a busy mother, and know that God is sending you yet another little one? You wonder how you will ever be able to cope. How will you manage more duties?

Or, you may be single, lonely, and longing for the love and companionship of a husband. Does it seem as though day after day goes by in a dull way, and nothing exciting or unusual ever happens to you? Whatever your lot in life, you need:

- Trust and faith
- Gratitude
- Love for children

TRUST AND FAITH

“Earth is for trust, heaven is for understanding.”

Just think, the same God who heard and answered Zacharias and Elizabeth’s prayers is our God today! Do I really believe God’s words and promises in difficult times?

Because of Zacharias’ unbelief, silence was imposed on him by the Lord. Until the power that silenced him gave him permission to speak again, he was unable to break that silence. Imagine nine months of silence for one intemperate speech.

Today, we can lose our praise and thanksgiving for months or even years when we give in to the language of unbelief. Elizabeth testified in Luke 1:45, “Blessed (happy) is she who believes.”

The Jewish culture highly valued having children, so much so that some said barrenness gave a man grounds for divorce. Imagine the blessing and honor Zacharias and Elizabeth would have missed had Zacharias divorced his lovely wife because she was barren. Would God have blessed Elizabeth with a child if she had become bitter in her barrenness?

Today, have courage. Take heart. Be faithful. Wholeheartedly do the work God has given you to do. Love Him more. Search and study His Word more. Then you will be ready and prepared (as Zacharias and Elizabeth were) for whatever God has for you.

God rewards those who faithfully keep on trusting and doing His will in difficult days.

GRATITUDE

“What a blessing it is to make gratitude a daily attitude.”

One day, Elsie Beachy was struck with a strange malady that eventually put her in a wheelchair. “I had to finally accept my condition, or drown in the misery of self-pity,” Elsie said. “If God wants to use me as a handicapped wife, a handicapped grandmother, I will do my best for Him.”

When we were in their area for school meetings, we spent the night at Ivan and Elsie’s house. As I walked into her kitchen that