

Women in the Days of the Judges

Memory Verse: *A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies* (Prov. 31:10 NIV).

Background Helps:

The days of the judges were a dark period in the history of Israel. “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). This period includes not only the book of Judges but also the book of Ruth (see Ruth 1:1) and the opening chapters of 1 Samuel before Saul was anointed the first king of Israel (1 Sam.10). We are able only to study a few of the more prominent women in this period. Among those omitted are Jephthah’s daughter (Jud. 11:29-40), Samson’s mother (Jud. 13), and Delilah (Jud. 16:4-22).

Lesson Helps:

Several alternative lesson plans:

1. My aim is to teach my students the story of Deborah (Jud. 4 and 5), so that they will exercise courageous leadership in times of difficulty. Deborah was a remarkable woman. She filled a variety of roles: a prophetess, wife, and judge (4:4-5); a military leader (4:6-10, 12-16); a poet (5:1ff.); and a mother in Israel (5:7). There is some evidence in the story that, in Deborah’s day, there was a vacuum of courageous male leadership in Israel (see 4:3, 8-9; 5:6-8, 15b-17, 23). So God raised up a woman to inspire and reactivate the nation. In the story, Deborah seems reluctant to take the lead in the battle; she summons Barak to command the army (4:6-7). But because he refuses to go into battle unless Deborah accompanies him (4:8-10, 14), she prophesies that the honor of the victory over the enemy commander, Sisera, will go to a woman (i.e., Jael in 4:17-22; 5:24-27). Not only is Deborah an example of one who exercises courageous leadership when others are timid, but she also is a model of one who encourages others to bold action. It is interesting to note that Barak is cited as a champion of faith in Hebrews 11:32, but it seems certain that he would not have been a hero of faith apart from the inspiration of Deborah. (Behind every great man stands a great woman!) Notice also that, throughout the story, Deborah gives the credit for victory to the Lord: 4:6-7, 9, 14-15; 5:2-5, 9-11, 31).
2. My aim is to teach my students the story of Ruth (book of Ruth), so that they will aim to be a virtuous wife like her (or for boys, so that they will seek a virtuous wife like her). The story of Ruth is a like a breath of fresh air in the dark days of the judges. Her character, along with Naomi and Boaz, are outstanding for their godliness. Compare Ruth 3:11 with the memory verse, Proverbs 31:10. Consult your teacher’s aid, “Handling the Character Study Lesson,” and compile a combination of characteristics that made Ruth “a woman of noble character.”

Contrast Ruth with Orpah (1:3-18). Urge the women in your class to follow Ruth's example. Urge single men to seek such a woman as a wife. (You may also want to take a sideways glance at Boaz to see the kind of man who is deserving of a woman like Ruth.) Notice the ultimate outcome for Ruth because of her devotion to the God of Israel: Ruth 4:13-18; Matt. 1:1, 5. Another option: Study the relationship between Naomi and Ruth to discover insights into a good mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship (or even a good mother/daughter relationship).

3. My aim is to teach my students the story of Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1–2:21), so that they will handle their trials in life with prayer. What was the significant trial that Hannah faced? How did she *not* react to her rival? How *did* she handle her trial? How did God answer her prayer and reward the sacrifice of her son to God's service (1:17, 19-20; 2:20-21)? How did Hannah respond to God's grace in her life (2:1-10)? Throughout, this story has particular pertinence to mothers. One possible approach suggested in "Handling the Character Study Lesson" is discovering the "life-principle" by which a person lived. Perhaps prayer would constitute the life principle in Hannah's life and, potentially, in the lives of your students. Hannah's influence went far beyond her own day (and even beyond the days of her son, Samuel): it is often pointed out that her prayer of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 seems to have inspired Mary's famous *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55.

Some other options:

4. Our weekly readings did not include the story of Samson. Some of you, however, particularly the teachers of teens or young single adults, may want to consider teaching a lesson on the women in Samson's life: his mother (Jud. 13), his Philistine wife (chaps. 14 and 15), the prostitute (16:1-3), and Delilah (16:4-21). What valuable lessons and warnings are included in these episodes!
5. Or, consider doing a lesson contrasting the "soap opera" love affairs in Samson's life (Jud. 14–16) and the wholesome romance between Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2–4). Again, this lesson would be particularly valuable for teens and young single adults.

One final comment: Virtually no attention has been given in this Forecast to *methods* of teaching. Teacher, whatever lesson focus you choose, make certain you include some interesting methods of either impression or expression (see attached sheet) during class.

Assignment:

-  Read about the wives of King David (Prominent Women of the Bible).
-  Memorize Psalm 51:1.

Methods of Teaching

Effective Bible teaching depends much on the use of effective teaching methods. The receptivity of your students to the lesson will owe much to the methods you employ to put the lesson across. The use of a variety of teaching methods is biblical. The prophets of the Old Testament and the preachers and teachers of the New—especially our Lord Jesus himself—employed a wealth of teaching techniques.

Methods of teaching can be categorized under two basic types: methods of impression and methods of expression. By impressional methods we mean those that are more teacher-oriented, methods that the teacher uses to impress the truth on the minds and hearts of students. Primarily these impressional methods appeal to the senses of sight and hearing, to the eyes and ears (i.e., audio-visual aids). By expressional methods we mean those that are more student-oriented, methods by which students are actively involved in the lesson: discussing, drawing, writing, researching, acting, doing—in other words, expressing themselves in a variety of ways.

It might be helpful to draw up two lists, methods of impression and methods of expression. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive.

Methods of Impression

- Lecture
- Storytelling
- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Overhead
- Powerpoint
- Flannelgraph
- Video, slides
- Puppets
- Object lesson
- Pictures
- Map study
- Flip chart
- Flash cards

Methods of Expression

- Brainstorming
- Buzz groups
- Question-answer, discussion
- Inductive Bible study
- Panel
- Debate
- Case studies
- Interview
- Research and oral reports
- Testimonies
- Personal inventory
- Bible memorization
- Handwork
- Choral reading
- Singing
- Role-playing, drama
- Field trip
- Quiz
- Drawing, art: mural, pictures, bulletin board display, etc.
- Creative writing: newspaper story, diary, poem, etc.
- Homework assignment

The fact that we have listed more methods of expression than impression is indicative of the fact that teachers should seek to maximize student participation. Also, teachers need to vary their methods of teaching. Each week they should aim to use at least one

new or different method of each type (impressional and expressional) than they used the previous week.

How do teachers decide which methods to use for any given lesson? Teaching methods should be selected based on (1) the aim of the lesson, (2) the length of time available, (3) the equipment and facilities available, (4) knowledge of pupil characteristics at each age level, (5) the needs and interests of each class of students, (6) the teacher's ability to use a particular method, and (7) ideas that emerge from the biblical text.