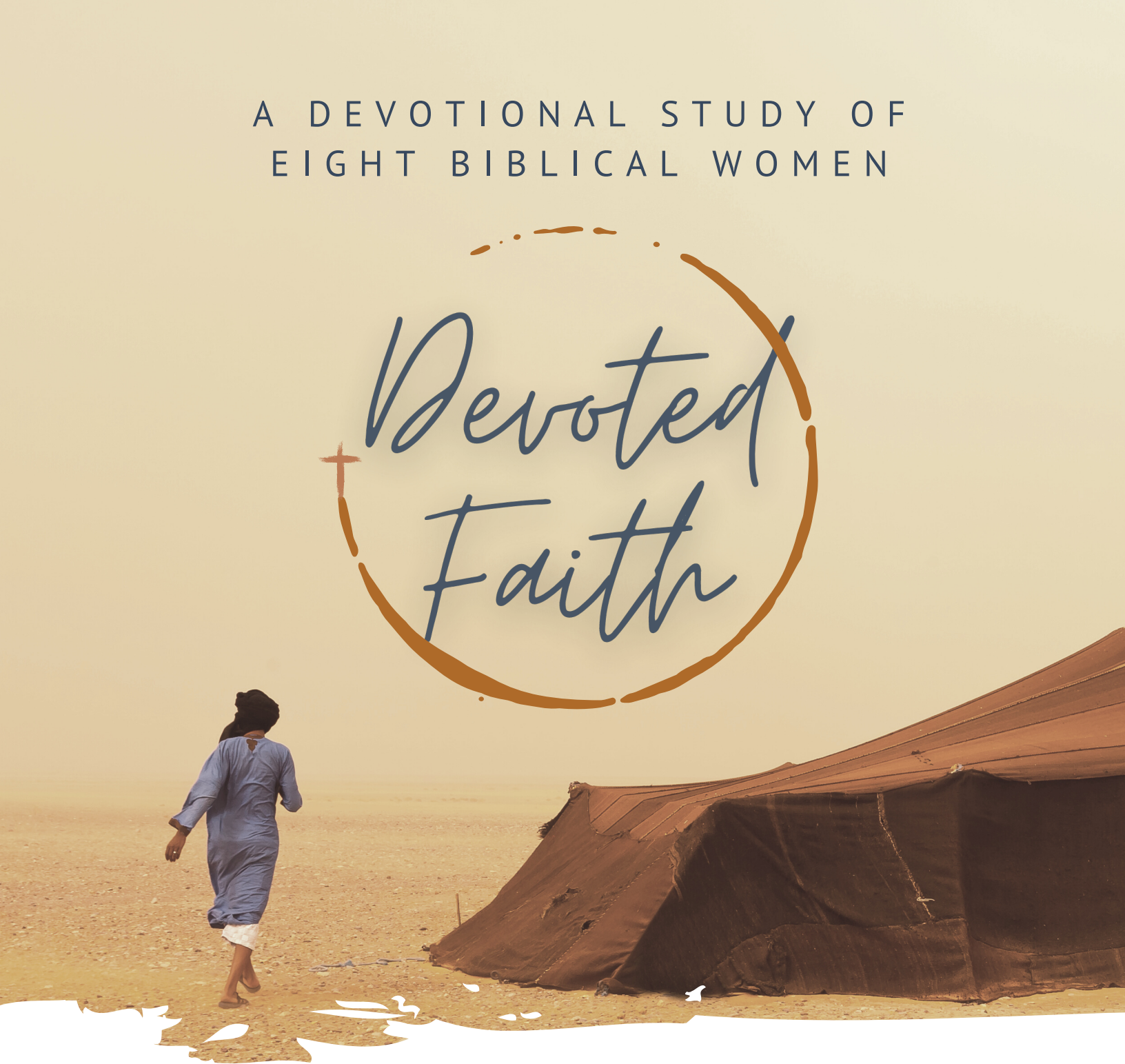


A DEVOTIONAL STUDY OF
EIGHT BIBLICAL WOMEN

A woman in a blue dress is walking away from a large, brown, tent-like structure in a desert landscape. The sky is a hazy, golden-brown color. The title 'Devoted Faith' is written in a blue, cursive font inside a hand-drawn orange circle with a small cross on the left side.

Devoted
Faith

AMY FLATTERY

FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP USE

WITH ACCOMPANYING VIDEOS
FILMED IN ISRAEL



CENTER FOR
HOLY LANDS STUDIES



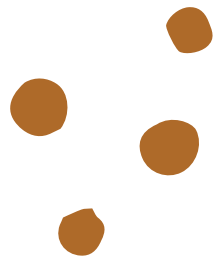
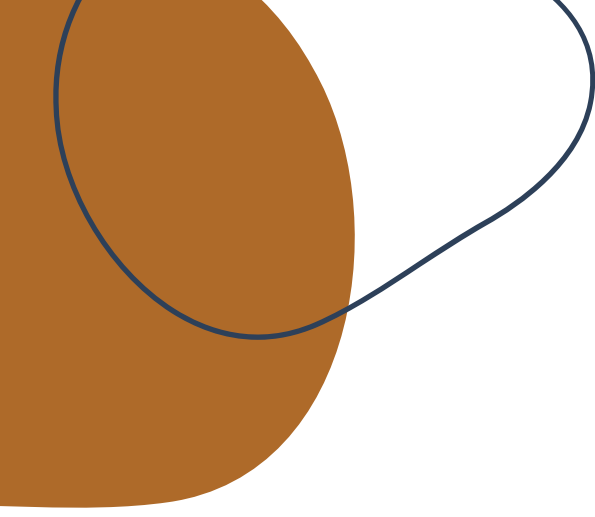
Devoted Faith

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY OF
EIGHT BIBLICAL WOMEN

AMY FLATTERY



CENTER FOR
HOLY LANDS STUDIES



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Printed in the United States of America.

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Before you begin, scan to watch the
Devoted Faith Introduction.
Or view at chls.link/dfintro

Hella,

Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith!" Matthew 15:28

Before you begin. . .

How are you doing? Really, how are you? Are you filled with hope, anxiety, fear, joy, faith? Are you suffering? As I am sure you know, you can be all, a few, or none of these at the same time. Wherever you are in your daily walk with God, let's do a bit of it together.

As women of faith, we are not just born, we are developed. Day by day, we learn from our experiences and grow from our mistakes. We are continually making decisions on our life journey that express our faith and show our character.

Like me, you are on a journey with God, and He is intent on developing His relationship with you, one day at a time, one decision at a time. You are in a process of developing your faith in your Father.

What is faith?

Is faith a noun? Is faith a verb? Is it something believed or acted upon? In the Bible, and still today, we see faith in many gods, faith in idols, faith in people, faith in technology, and faith in leaders. People and faith in "things" will never live up to the pedestal upon which they are placed. But I can promise you there is One who will! Journey with God on a path of faith. He is the One who will never fail you.

I lived in Jerusalem for several years for postgraduate work. I walked the land and often considered the many people who walked it before me. They were people who existed and were not simply written about in stories. I could not have gained an intuitive understanding of their lives without first spending time in the land itself.

There are many women named in the Bible, some more known than others, who had a great impact on the biblical story. Theirs was a lifetime journey of faith, or a lack thereof. Some of these women grant us wonderful examples of faith and others not so much.

In this study, you will encounter a few women from the Bible who, for good or bad, exude examples of boldness, mercy, power, struggle, joy, and suffering. All these women give examples of how to live—or how not to live—by faith.

Together, we will look at a snapshot of the life of Sarah, Rahab, Jezebel, Ruth, Bathsheba, Hannah, Mary, and Salome. By considering these women and learning about each one's life in the place where they lived, we will gain an understanding of what they faced and how they approached and dealt with challenges.

Your journey of faith will be distinctive, just as it was for these women in their biblical time period. You, like them, are at your own point in your walk and relationship with God. Let's uncover and discuss truths learned from these biblical women of faith and open our hearts and souls to what God wants to say to us today.

Join me as we focus on relationship, character, and faith in the One who created you and covets your companionship. Join me as we reflect on examples of devoted faith.



Amy Flattery
Director, Center for Holy Lands Studies

The How-To

Videos from Israel

Videos filmed in the land of Israel are included at the beginning of each study session. They were filmed near the location of each story or event. The eight biblical women in this study existed in real places and at real times in history. The videos will help to give context to their lives, and insight and application to your life. You may find many comparisons! Before you begin your reading, simply scan the QR code with your phone camera to watch the video. Or enjoy them via the website link or digital download.

Bible Reading

At the beginning of each study, you will find the Bible reading selections. Consider dividing the reading into sections or begin your time with the full reading prior to digging in.

Personal and Group Reflections

Throughout the devotion you will have opportunity for personal reflection. These are interspersed throughout the eight-part study. Fill them in however you see fit. They are there for you. The dig deeper opportunities are located toward the end of each section. If you have time, you can answer the questions on your own or later if you are participating in a group setting.

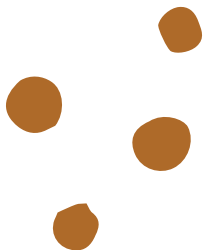
Bonus Material

- *Map of Israel*
- *Ages of the Biblical Land of Israel*
- *Historical and Archaeological Periods*



1

Sarah



SARAH

*A Promise
Fulfilled*



*Before you begin, scan to watch the video on Sarah.
Or view at chls.link/sarah*

Bible Reading: Genesis 12, 16–23

***And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.
Hebrews 11:11 (NIV)***

Have you caught yourself reading through the Bible or, perhaps better said, reading over the verses without giving much thought to the details of those living within its pages? I have! In our hurried lives, it's of great benefit to take a few minutes to slow down and read between the lines.

For example, have you carefully read the story of Sarah and Abraham? Theirs is a story set in the Old Testament, during the early second millennium (around 1850 BC), nearly four thousand years ago. It is a story of obedience, hope, despair, promise, and finally, fulfillment. It's also a story filled with truths that still ring true.

After a long journey, Sarah and Abraham lived out their years in the biblical site of Beersheba, in Israel. The story of how they arrived at the location of Beersheba and the call God placed on their lives is recorded in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. It is a narrative of "Go." And then, "I will." It is a story set in obedience to God and, as a result, the fulfillment of His promises.

Sarah, initially called Sarai, was the wife and half-sister of Abram (*I know what you're thinking, but yes, they did this back then—it was normal!*), who was later renamed Abraham. Sarah was also the mother of Isaac, and we read his story later in Genesis. Sarah's name means *princess*, perhaps assuming that she had a higher standing than other women of her time.

God had plans for Sarah and Abraham. Genesis 12 records that God instructed Abraham, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (vv. 1–3).

What were Sarah and Abraham to do? Leave their family, home, and all they knew?

Yes. Indeed, this was the case.

They left their country, their people, and all things familiar to them, and they journeyed to an unknown land.

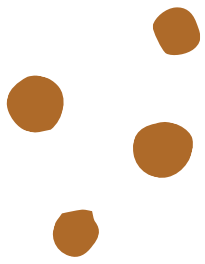
If called, would you, or have you made a similar sacrifice? Why?

Before settling in the location of Beersheba (see map), Sarah and Abraham were living in Ur in Mesopotamia. Sarah followed her husband as he followed God’s call. They left their home and their comfort zone for the land of Canaan, leaving a culture that Sarah knew so well. They departed from Ur, the land of the Chaldeans, and traveled to Haran, what would later be Babylon.

They traveled from place to place over several years with a considerable number of family members who traveled with them. They concluded their journey in Beersheba.

There are many occasions in the Bible story where God said, “Go, do, believe,” and then...I will *bless* you. We see this unfolding in the lives of Sarah and Abraham. God required obedience, trust, and faith, and later came the fulfillment of the promise.

Stepping out in uncertainty is *not easy*.



Have you had an experience of stepping out in obedience, not knowing the outcome or how you would do what was asked of you?

Are you at a point where you can look back and see the path where God has led you? How was He faithful in the process?

I wonder, did Sarah expect to be a partner to Abraham in the promise God made to him? She was brought into the story, into the journey, but seemingly indirectly. It hints that Sarah *might* be included and that she *may* be the mother of the nation; however, at this point, it was not a sure thing in her mind.

Sarah has been recognized as a somewhat contrary figure in the Old Testament. She appeared willing on the one hand to follow in the journey of faith alongside Abraham. On two separate occasions, under Abraham's wishes, she acted as his sister rather than his wife hoping to gain security and wealth for Abraham. At times, she also seemed harsh when interacting with her servant, Hagar.

We know from the Book of Genesis that Sarah was barren. She was old, and because of her advanced age, she no longer had the ability to fulfill the promise God had given to Abraham—to birth a great nation. Sarah's faith journey was entwined in the promise God gave to Abraham but was not yet given to her. Did Sarah have her own personal faith, or was hers the faith of her husband? Was she along for the ride or part of the story?

Take a quick synopsis of your life. How do you take responsibility for your own faith and relationship with God? Have you ever relied on someone else to fulfill that role for you?

I imagine there may have been some confusion regarding what God meant by “I will make you a great nation.” After all, in obedience, Sarah and Abraham left their home, their stability, and their sedentary life. They exchanged it all, at the call of God, for a nomadic life filled with movement and adversity.

God had already confirmed His promise to Abraham but not to Sarah. First, God told Abraham he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Second, God said that Abraham’s seed would be as the dust of the earth—“so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring can be counted” (13:16). And later, when Abraham reminded God that he still had no legitimate heir, God promised that Abraham’s seed would be like the stars of the sky in number (15:1–6).

What did Sarah do?

Though barren and certainly suffering from the shame carried with being childless in that time period, Sarah also proved to be quite independent. As she was childless, she took the initiative and gave Hagar, her Egyptian servant, to Abraham in hopes of birthing Abraham a son. This act was customary during this time in history. Soon, Hagar bore Abraham a son named Ishmael. Does this mean Hagar was now the one to fulfill the future role as mother to the nations? Sarah and Hagar were not on the best of terms. Sarah’s plan backfired, and she resented Hagar and the child she bore to Abraham. Sarah mistreated Hagar and sent her away with the child into the desert.

It is not until Genesis 17:16 when the Bible tells us of God’s promise to Abraham about Sarah, “I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become the mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” (NIV)

Finally, this is where Sarah's journey of faith had led her. As we have witnessed, it was not a perfect journey. It was uncertain at times, yet God worked in and through suffering and disbelief, making Sarah a mother to the nations.

Sarah finally had confirmation that the promise to Abraham rested inside her. However, when the words of God were spoken, Sarah reacted in laughter. She was old. She was past the time of childbirth. How could she possibly fulfill the promise?

But God! Later in Matthew 19:26, Jesus told us, "with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Write about your "But God" moments! What once appeared impossible became possible by faith?

Sarah conceived and gave birth to her son Isaac when she was around the age of ninety. Can you imagine!

The Bible does not tell us much more regarding the life of Sarah. There was a point when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Abraham was again obedient to God and at the last moment, God replaced Isaac with a ram. We do not know if Sarah knew of the near sacrifice of Isaac or its potential impact on her. Sarah passed away at the age of 127. She was mourned by Abraham and buried in the tomb of the patriarchs, not far from Beersheba.

What do we know? Sarah went. Sarah obediently followed when God said, "Go." We do know that God *did* make her the mother of nations. In fact, Sarah is mentioned in the faith "hall of fame" in Hebrews 11:11–12, "And by faith Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."

Faith and obedience led Sarah and Abraham to a place of inheritance, an inheritance built and designed by God. By faith, Sarah conceived and considered God faithful to her. And from her womb, a nation was born.

Sarah and Abraham were told to leave their home, their family, and all things familiar to them. Their obedience allowed for a fulfillment of a promise that still impacts the world.

What is God concerned with? Is He concerned first with the *result* of your obedience or first *your* obedience? With your will turned over to God, He can fulfill His purpose in and through your life. He asks for your trust out of love for you and for those you influence.

God is concerned with His relationship with you! Write about a situation in your life when you had to choose to be obedient, even if it meant hardship. Are you in that time now? How do you partner with your Father to strengthen your relationship with God—to live a life of obedience and faith?

In Judaism, it is common to push back and forth in relationship, as in “iron sharpening iron” (Proverbs 27:17). So too with God. Sarah and Abraham followed the directive of God, yet there are other instances in the Bible when there is dialogue with God regarding what path to take and why! Your relationship with God is just that—a relationship!

It can be as effortless as walking and talking to God daily and spending time in prayer and devotion. How would you characterize your relationship with your Father in heaven? How do you interact with God?

Sarah had a baby in her old age. The promise was fulfilled! What may seem impossible is not impossible for God. Is it imperative that you witness the fulfillment of your walk with God, the impact it has on others, the fruit? Like Sarah, you will likely not see the abounding result of your faith and obedience. But what you will have and experience is fulfillment *in* your relationship with God. Is this enough for you?

What does obedience to God mean to you? Write about those whom you are impacting through your obedience to the call of God on your life.



We are all on a journey of faith. As you walk through your life, devotion to your faith, spending time with the Lord, and growing in your relationship with God will only strengthen you during good or difficult experiences in your life.

There is so much more to write and discover about people in the Bible. Open the Scriptures daily and let the lives of the people in its pages speak to you. Let His Word seep in and impact how you relate to the world. To do so is a wonderful expression of Devoted Faith.

I pray you are richly blessed!

About the Author

Amy grew up in Lynden, Washington. She attended Calvin College and earned a B.A. in biblical studies and theology. In 1997, she moved to Jerusalem, Israel, to pursue her M.A. at Jerusalem University College. She studied New Testament backgrounds and Jewish history of the Second Temple Period. In 2002, she moved to Belgium where she lectured at Continental Theological Seminary. Amy cofounded the Center for Holy Lands Studies in 2011 and became the director of CHLS in 2016. As an author and public speaker, she presents at events around the world and teaches on several trips to the lands of the Bible each year. Amy is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God. She is married to Dr. Mark Flattery, president of Network211. Together they also serve as Assemblies of God world missionaries. Most importantly, they have six amazing kids.

Devoted Faith

FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP USE

Many women are named in the Bible who had a significant impact on the biblical story. Some are more known than others. Theirs was a lifetime journey of faith, or a lack thereof.

The *Devoted Faith Devotional and Video Study* encounters eight women from the Bible.

SARAH, HANNAH, RAHAB, JEZEBEL, RUTH, BATHSHEBA, SALOME, AND MARY

Their life journeys illustrate examples of boldness, mercy, power, struggle, joy, and suffering—all giving examples of how to live, or how *not* to live by faith. Dig in and consider what God wants to say to you today.



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