

# Part 6: Major Gals

## GIRLS WHO MOVE THE PLOT ALONG

<b>Eve</b>	Adam's 'help-meet'	Child of God, co-sinner with Adam.
<b>Sarah &amp; Hagar</b>	Abraham's Semitic wife and her Egyptian maid.	At the head of two great ethnic lines, Jew and Arab. But also at the head of other Biblical lines: promise/flesh; faith/works; from above/from below. See Galatians
<b>Rebekah</b>	Isaac's wife	Went from being childless to being the mother of Jacob/Israel. God used her shrewdness to divert the Messianic line through Jacob rather than Esau.
<b>Zipporah</b>	Moses' Missus.	Saves the life of the great leader with blood shed for sin.
<b>Rahab</b>	God's most unlikely heroine	Saves the Israelite spies and is herself saved at Jericho. She introduces the gentiles into an inheritance in 'the Promised Land'
<b>Ruth</b>	Moabite-ess and the starting point of David's genealogy	Ruth's story introduces the Kinsman-Redeemer role to the line that will lead to King David and the Messiah. She also brings gentile blood into the line. Hers is also a fascinating story of loyalty and romance. <i>Ruth</i>
<b>Hannah</b>	Samuel the King-maker's mother.	No mean theologian whose theology fires her faith amidst much personal pain.
<b>Abigail</b>	One of King David's wives. (He also had a sister called Abigail; confusing or what? (2Ch 2:16))	Averts disaster for the future King by her wise intervention in a dangerous flare-up between David and her then husband Nabal the Slob. 1Sam25
<b>Esther</b>	Beautiful orphan who became queen of Persia and saved the Jews from destruction	The thin line that would lead to the Messiah is threatened while the Jews are vulnerable in exile. Esther is there 'for such a time as this'. <i>Esther</i>
<b>Mary</b>	Mother of Jesus	The most honoured of all women, her acceptance of God's difficult will is one of the great paradigms for the Christian life. <i>Luke 2:26ff</i>

## GIRLS WHO ARE SIMPLY FASCINATING

<b>Anna</b>	Means "grace", <i>Lk. 2:36ff</i> . One of the six women called "Prophetess" in the Bible (Deborah, <i>Judg. 4:4</i> ; Huldah, <i>2Kings 22:14</i> ; Miriam, <i>Ex. 15:20</i> ; 'Mrs.' Isaiah, <i>Is. 8:3</i> ; Noadiah, <i>Neh. 6:14</i> .)
<b>Bathsheba</b>	Means "daughter of the covenant" - Becomes David's wife after he has her husband Uriah murdered. The baby born of that affair also dies; their fourth son, Solomon, eventually succeeds to the throne after Bathsheba intercedes on his behalf to the king. <i>2Sam. 11&amp;12</i> .
<b>Deborah</b>	Means "bee or wasp". One of the 'judges' or 'chieftans' of Israel in the period between Joshua and Saul. She also wrote a great song. Think of her as part Boadicea, part Diva! <i>Judges 4&amp;5</i>
<b>Elisabeth</b>	Means "God of the Covenant" (or 'oath' or 'promise'). Mother of John the Baptist, wife of Zacharias the priest, and cousin of Mary, mother of Jesus. She was barren until late in life, as were Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, etc. <i>Luke 1:26ff</i>
<b>Jezebel</b>	Means "without cohabitation". This wife of King Ahab The Wimp is the most notorious woman in the Bible and perhaps the most stupid too, for her attempt on the life of Elijah. In the end, she was eaten by dogs: Wife becomes Chum! (The 'Jezebel' in <i>Rev. 2:20</i> is probably not the person's given name; the name characterizes ungodliness.) <i>1Kings 16 to 2Kings 9</i>
<b>Leah</b>	Means "weary". She's the older sister of Rachel, whom Jacob had planned to marry after seven years labour. The surprising switch was made on the wedding night and he found himself married to Leah instead. In the end he serves fourteen years for the two wives, but it was Leah "the unloved" who gave him six sons and a daughter and with whom he was buried.
<b>Michal</b>	(feminine of Michael) Means "who is like God?" David's first wife, younger daughter of Saul, sister of Jonathan. She loved David (maybe unrequited), and saved him from her father's wrath placing a dummy in the bed. But later she despised him for dancing before the Lord in front of everyone so perhaps was "an unbeliever", to snare David as Saul intended. <i>2Sam. 6</i>
<b>Mary Magdalene</b>	Jesus cast seven devils out of this Mary, who saw him crucified ( <i>Mk. 15:40</i> ) and three days later accompanied Salome and the mother of James with spices to anoint the body. She was the one who ran to tell Peter about the empty tomb, and who later saw the two angels, and met the risen Jesus.
<b>Priscilla</b>	Wife of Aquila; this New Testament couple accompanied Paul and took Apollos (who was well up on O.T. theology) aside to explain the gospel life more fully. Paul called them his "helpers in Christ", <i>Rom. 16:3</i> , and referred to the Church in their house at Corinth. <i>Acts 18</i>

# Part 6: Major Gals

## WHY WE STUDY PEOPLE

- **Because of the plot**  
When we see that the Bible is one book with plot-lines that run from the beginning to the end, the people involved in progressing the plot become crucial.
- **Because of God**  
God is far more interested in the people that he has made than in anything else in the rest of all creation. Why? because although every part of creation is made for his glory, only the human bits are made in his image and only the human bits offer what Romans calls 'reasonable, [or intelligent, or knowing] worship'.
- **Because of the way we learn**  
What God has done with people in Scripture gives us many examples of what God might want to do with us. We learn from their weak points and from their strong points as God gives us a window onto his transforming work in the soul.

## HOW WE STUDY PEOPLE

When we're learning from the characters in the Bible, some of the following questions might help us to stick to the text:

- What's just happened and what happens after they leave the stage? (Where do they fit in the plot?)
- How did God fit them for the part they played? (What did they have to learn; how did God teach it? How did he change them?)
- What were their strengths or weaknesses of character?
- How did they relate to God in terms of their obedience to his will?
- What do they make me aware of about myself and about what God might need to do in my life?

## WHO WE STUDY

### GIRLS WHO MOVE THE PLOT ALONG

'Behind ever successful man stands an amazed (and amazing!) woman', as the saying goes. The men who form those pylons carrying the current of the major plot-lines through scripture never worked alone. At every stage in the progress of God's work – and often in a crisis – women play a pivotal rôle. In fact, these women are very rarely behind their men: they are usually more 'at their side' doing the 'Adam's rib' thing or even confronting the men (well there's a surprise!). This gives us a 'group' of girls (what *is* the collective noun?) who are certainly vital for the work and revelation of God from Genesis to Revelation.

### GIRLS WHO ARE SIMPLY FASCINATING

There is another collection (perhaps 'bevy' or 'sisterhood' or 'flock'? You tell me!) of women in the Bible who give us fascinating examples, to follow or avoid, of womanhood.

### REAL WOMEN IN THE REAL WORLD

The hugely diverse women in the Bible lived in societies very different from our own. The strongly male-dominated social structures of both Old and New Testament gave most (though not all) women a very limited set of options in life. Within these options life could undoubtedly be rich; and through the influence that they could have on men, women could certainly shape or even safeguard their own and their family's futures. But the expectations that most males had of women oriented around subservience: bearing and rearing children, keeping the house, and sex. The primary Eden role of companion is subsumed by the tensions of desire and power that God said would prevail (Gen 3:16). This makes the women in the Bible potent expressions of both the impact of the fall and the impact of grace. Women both conform to and rebel against the norms of their society. In the New Testament, as men and women are re-united in Christ, the norms of God's new society stand in stark contrast to the flagrant chauvinism of the world. Which should mean encouragements for Christian girls and some uncomfortable challenges for Christian blokes in a still fallen world.