Excerpts for Bible Sisters

9781501834318

Potiphar’s Wife

*Genesis 39:1, 7, 10*

*When Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, Pharaoh’s chief officer, the commander of the royal guard and an Egyptian, purchased* *him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. . . . Some time later, his master’s wife became attracted to Joseph. . . . Every single day she tried to convince him, but he wouldn’t agree to sleep with her or even to*

*be with her.*

Overindulgence, boredom, insecurity, or craving attention can lead us to act in ways that are inappropriate, contrary to society, and even evil. When Potiphar’s wife could not entice Joseph to indulge her adulterous desires, she made false and damaging accusations against him. The result was a devastating loss of freedom for a young man who had already lost much in his life.

We live in a culture in the United States where many persons have become accustomed to indulging themselves regardless of the impact on others’ lives. As Christians, people of God, we cannot allow our own desires to inspire our actions without giving due consideration to how our actions affect others’ lives.

God calls us to do justice and love kindness. In this way we can demonstrate love of God and love of neighbor. If we test our words and our actions against that yardstick, we can move for- ward knowing that the things we say and do benefit others and are pleasing in God’s sight.

**Prayer for the Day:** Holy One, make me an instrument of your love and your justice this day. Amen.

Leah

*Genesis 29:23*

*However, in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to*

*Jacob, and he slept with her.*

Whenever I have taught the story of Leah and Rachel in Bible study, class members doubt that Jacob was unaware that the woman in his bed was not his beloved Rachel. Leah has been generally viewed with compassion, because given that time and the society we see her as having no choice in the matter of her husband. While this might be an understandable reading of this text, we would be naive to miss the fact that Leah was also complicit in this injustice against her sister.

Leah would have known what was occurring when she was taken to the tent of the bridegroom. There is no evidence that she was drugged, so she could have alerted Jacob to her presence in place of her younger sister. Further, Leah’s later behavior against Rachel, particularly in a polygamous society, condemns her complicity in the injustice perpetrated against both Jacob and Rachel.

How are we complicit in the machinations against other women? Do we hide behind our lack of power while other women are abused and neglected? As we look at the suffering of women across the world, we are called by God to speak out against the injustices they suffer. We must not remain silent lest God condemns us for our part in their suffering. We must give the voiceless women of the world a chance to speak through our voices raised on their behalf.

**Prayer for the Day:** God of justice and love, awaken us and let our voices speak out for those who cannot speak. Amen.

Women with Musical Instruments

*1 Samuel 18:6*

*After David came back from killing the Philistine, and as the troops returned home, women from all of Israel’s towns came out to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with tambourines, rejoicing, and musical instruments.*

It was a time for celebration, and the women of the towns came out with their musical instruments, singing and dancing as they went to meet their victorious king, Saul, and the conquering hero, David, who had just slain the giant Goliath.

Little did they know that their celebration would be the beginning of a spiral of jealousy on King Saul’s part against David. In the moment, all they were concerned with was celebrating the day with no thought for tomorrow. That is generally the way with celebrations. When we are in the throes of joy, singing and dancing and making merry, it is unusual that anyone would give serious attention to the possibility of negative outcomes from something so positive. It is difficult to imagine that anyone would begrudge another the accolades he or she deserves.

When we celebrate others in the spirit of Christian love, our spirits and theirs are enriched. Moreover, we are blessed by God’s spirit, present and active in us and in the joyful gathering that at its best is a celebration of the life that God gives.

**Prayer for the Day:** Affirming God, we celebrate with joyful praise your presence in our lives. Amen.

Atarah

*1 Chronicles 2:26*

*Jerahmeel had another wife named Atarah; she was the mother of Onam.*

For whom was she a crown? *Atarah* means “crown,” and al- though we know nothing about her, one would hope that Atarah was of such value to those in her life that they regarded her as highly as a crown.

Most of us like to think that people value us enough that they would miss us if we were not around. But when we are too dependent on others to legitimize our being and we have no sense of self-worth, we open ourselves to emotional and spiritual, if not physical, abuse. True worth comes from within, from the realization that no matter who or what we are—no matter how old or how young, whether thin or fat or somewhere in between, regard- less of race or color, or however we are defined, our worth comes from the reality that each of us is a child of God.

God is creator of all, and according to the biblical story every- thing God made, God considered good. So as a created child of God, you are good. Believe it, live it, love it, celebrate it. Wear that knowledge in the crown that is your life.

**Prayer for the Day:** Creator of all, thank you for placing the stamp of your goodness on us. Help us to value ourselves as you value us. Amen.

Tamar—Absalom’s Daughter

*2 Samuel 14:27*

*Absalom had three sons and one daughter. The daughter’s name was*

*Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.*

Absalom had loved his sister so much that he killed her rapist and voluntarily exiled himself to avoid the king’s wrath. With his restoration to Jerusalem and the forgiveness of his father, King Da- vid, he began to build a family for himself. And Absalom named his daughter Tamar. The text does not tell us what became of his sister, and since the custom was to name children after their ancestors, we may assume that she had died. Given her circumstances, why would he give his daughter the same name? Perhaps the love he felt for his sister was so great that just having another female in his house with her name gave him comfort.

As I write this, it is September 11 and the memory of the disaster that occurred in so many lives in 2001 is actively present in individuals, in families, and across the nation. The United States of America lost much on that day, much more than the thousands of lives and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. And like Absalom, the United States is doing everything possible to keep the memory of what it lost alive for the present generation and those yet to come. God calls us to live in the present and to look to the future with hope. Looking back helps to shape a better future but only as much as we allow God’s presence to have free rein in our plans.

**Prayer for the Day:** Lord, may we never forget the lives lost. Grant us renewed strength to move forward, knowing our hope is in you. Amen.

Chloe

*1 Corinthians 1:11*

*My brothers and sisters, Chloe’s people gave me some information about you, that you’re fighting with each other.*

Divisions! Regardless of what God does to bring us together, we remain a divided people. Wherever the community gathers, whatever mission or ministry inspires its formation, strife and di- visions taint even the noblest causes and all too quickly become a part of the community’s life.

Chloe had provided facilities and resources for the new Chris- tian converts, and I’m sure she was disturbed to realize that differences in the community marred the unity expected of the people of Christ. Perhaps the members of her household saw her distress and decided to bring it to Paul’s attention since he started the church. That action spoke of their care and compassion for Chloe.

All of us need people in our lives we can count on to look out for us, who will observe the things that cause us hurt or distress and take action on our behalf. And we need to be as observant on behalf of others and demonstrate our care for their well-being.

**Prayer for the Day:** Loving Savior, make us a caring people and move us to act for the good of others. Amen.

*From Paul, who is a prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus, . . . [to] Apphia our sister.*

The Apostle Paul knew the value of Christian women in the church. He mentioned them frequently in his letters, and given the nature of his communication to Philemon, Paul’s naming of Apphia in his salutation marks her as a leader and devout worker in the church.

Although women constitute the majority of active persons in the Christian church at large, it is unjust, sad, and definitely lamentable that in so many areas of the life of the church—and especially in some denominations—women are unrecognized, demeaned, and denied their God-ordained places in the leadership of congregations.

Paul’s recognition of women’s contributions is simply a re- flection of Jesus’ acknowledgment and inclusion of women in his company and his ministry. Jesus allowed women to touch him, speak to him, sit with him, and walk with him. It is no accident that he appeared first to a woman in his resurrection power. God has commissioned us women, and we do not need recognition from any other leader in the church. Christ names us and salutes us. Now let us go forward to do the work he has set before us.

**Prayer for the Day:** Christ our head, you have set us in place to carry out your mission. May we accept the commission and go forward to do the work of the kingdom in your name. Amen.