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God's Women in Action

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Senior Sunday School

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Special in this issue:

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- Become inspired by Inspirational Present-Day Christian Women
- Read about the clothes and jewelry worn by Bible day women in Bible time fashionistas
- Read about the daily lives of Bible women in Bible Life & Times
- Read about some Scary History in the life of the Christian church—the story of Bloody Mary and Elizabeth I!
- Have your daily chuckle with Bible Humour!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **God's Women in Action**—a newsletter produced by the Senior Sunday School class of First Baptist Church in Hammonds Plains, NS. Contributors include Sunday School students, teachers, and invited guests.

You may be tempted to ask “why do a newsletter about women in Bible times?” There are numerous women and girls who play various roles in the Bible. Some of those roles are well known and well respected—like that of the Virgin Mary. But there are many more Bible women who are not well known, or who are known only by their actions—not by name. The Shunammite woman is one example. This newsletter will allow us to explore the role that women played in Bible times, their importance to Christian life as shown through the Bible, and their relevance to the lives of today's Christians. This newsletter will also focus on the life and times of women during the years in which the books of the Bible were written.

We feel that enhancing our understanding of women and how they contributed to early religion and Bible times will help us to grow as Christians.

We invite you to read and enjoy our newsletter. You can also access it online by clicking [Youth Ministry](http://www.hammondsplainsbaptist.com) at <http://www.hammondsplainsbaptist.com>. Remember to sign our *Guestbook* and post in our *Blog*!

Bible Life & Times by Lorrina

Women's Clothing in Biblical Times: The Production of Fabric

The women were largely responsible for the production of all clothing. Clothing in ancient Israel was usually woollen fabric or linen.

Wool could be dyed or left its natural colour. Women helped to tend the animals in the flock. They sorted and carded the wool after the sheep and goats had been shorn. The wool was spun into lengths of fabric with portable looms.

Flax was grown and harvested for linen. It was then dried. The flax was carded and spun into either fine or course linen strips. Linen produced by the Egyptians would be woven extremely fine.

The women prepared various colours of dye. Blue came from wood, yellow from pomegranate, lilac from myrtle, etc. Even the poorest Jewish women used vegetable dye to get a range of colours for their clothes. Flax didn't take dye well.

Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame (Genesis 2:25).

When sin came that glory left.

Biography by Karen The Shunammite Woman

There are many women in the Bible who are not named. The Shunammite woman is one of them. These women are important because they provide role models for modern-day Christians.

The Shunammite woman is discussed in 2 Kings 4: 8-37. The story begins with a prophet of God named Elisha. Elisha made frequent trips to the town of Shunem. In one of his trips, a local woman urged him to join her for a meal. Elisha agreed. Soon, the meals with the Shunammite woman and her husband became a regular stop for Elisha on his trips to Shunem.

Now the Shunammite woman was very well to do. She had a wonderful home. She and her husband were financially comfortable, and they were well respected in her community. By all appearances, she had everything that a woman could want. But appearances can be deceiving.

The couple from Shunem had run out of time to have a family. Her husband was becoming elderly, and still, she had not been blessed with a child. This would have been very heartbreaking for a woman in any time, but particularly for women in Bible Times.

Despite her sadness over not having become a mother, the Shunammite woman remained contented and caring and filled with compassion. It was her compassion that had led her to ask Elisha to stay for that first meal, which then paved the way for many more meals together. Finally, she asked her husband to prepare a bedroom upstairs in their home so that Elisha could stay there on his regular visits to Shunem.

One evening, Elisha summoned her to his room to ask her what he could do in return for all of their hospitality. The Shunammite woman responded that she had all that she needed. She was happy and contented. There was nothing he could do beyond enjoying their hospitality.

Even though she never mentioned not having given birth, Elisha learned of her deep and untold sadness from one of her servants. He then told the Shunammite woman that a year from then she would give birth to a son. And she did!

The moral of this story, and the legacy of the Shunammite woman, is that one must avoid anger, bitterness or envy, and that keeping your heart full of happiness and love is rewarded by God.

Words of Wisdom

The LORD replied:

"My son, My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you, During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

... Extracted from Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson (1936)

Bible Time Fashionistas by Monica

Clothing

Most clothing in biblical times were made from natural products such as sheep's wool, goat hair and flax plant (which was used to make linen). Today we identify expensive clothes by designer labels or the type of material. In biblical times you could identify expensive clothing by the brightness of the colour of the clothes. People who did not have much money wore pale colours and simple designs. The wealthy wore deep purples and blues and fancy patterns with bright colours.

When people were feeling down or sorry for their sins they wore "sack cloth" which was scratchy and made from goat's hair. It was normally used to make bags.

Jewelry

Even in biblical times there were jewelry designers. The jewelry was made of precious stones and gold.

The women wore earrings which were usually gold hoops and sometimes had stones hanging from them. The wealthy wore bracelets of gold and precious metals. The poorer people's bracelets were made of common metals or cords. The women wore rings on their fingers and toes. Nose rings were worn made of ivory, gold, silver and may have jewels on them as well. The women liked to wear anklets that had stones on them so it made a "tinkling" sound when they walked.

Cosmetics

They did have cosmetics in ancient times. Henna was popular to stain skin and colour hair. Perfumes were used of frankincense, myrrh and aloes. Crushed berries were used to colour the women's cheeks.

It doesn't matter whether it was biblical times or modern days, women had - and still have - a passion for fashion...

Scary History by Christie

Women and the Protestant Revolution: Mary and Elizabeth Tudor

During the 1500's, England was ruled by King Henry VIII. This King, aside from various indiscretions, is most well known for eradicating the Roman Catholic Church in England, and bringing rise to the Anglican Church. King Henry VIII officially broke his allegiance with Rome between 1533 and 1534, much to the chagrin of the many devout Catholic people under his reign, not the least of which included his ex-wife Catherine of Aragon, and his eldest daughter, Mary.

When Henry died in 1547, the rule of England was hastily taken up by his only son, Edward, who was only nine years of age at the time. Edward, however, died at the young age of 15, forcing one of his two sisters to take over the throne. Mary, the eldest daughter was devoutly Catholic, whereas Elizabeth was Anglican. In the end, Mary inherited the crown, and began a mass repatriation of England back into the Catholic Church. It was during her rule that she became known as 'Bloody' Mary.

Mary was radical in her efforts to return her country to what she believed to be the true faith— so radical that she had those who refused executed in public and painful ways. During her reign she had many high priests and important figures within the Anglican Church killed, unwittingly making them martyrs for their cause.

When Mary died at the age of forty-two, the power in England again shifted when Elizabeth became the new Monarch. Elizabeth thrust England into one of its most prosperous times, and is known as one of the most powerful and revered women in history. During her reign, Elizabeth returned England to a peaceful state, and made the Anglican Church the official Church in England, as it still stands today.

While it is the men during the Protestant Reformation, such as Martin Luther, or Henry VIII, who are most clearly remembered for their actions during this time, ultimately, it was the women who made lasting changes in the most powerful empire of all time.

Bible Trivia

Did you know that:

1. Psalm 118 is the middle chapter of the entire Bible?
2. Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
3. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible?
4. The Bible has 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118?
5. If you add up all the chapters except Psalm 118, you get a total of 1188 chapters.
6. 1188 or Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse of the entire Bible? Should the central verse not have an important message? "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man." Psalm 118:8

Bible Myths by Hanna

How many children did Adam and Eve have?

Many believe that Adam and Eve, the first man and woman on Earth, had only two sons: Cain and Abel. But what is wrong with this picture? Clearly, if Adam and Eve had only two sons, the population of the Earth would have died off very quickly!

A reading of Genesis (5:4) refers to other children of this famous couple. But how many other children? How many were boys and how many were girls?

You may recall that Adam lived very long, about 930 years according to the Bible, so he could easily have had more than two children. Jewish tradition actually teaches that Adam and Eve had a total of 56 children: 33 boys and 23 girls. Now that is certainly a very big family, and clearly sufficiently large to populate the Earth!

How many ribs does a man have anyway?

A number of people believe that men have one fewer rib than women. Could this be true? Well, medical doctors say no. This mistaken belief comes from the traditional Christian message from the book of Genesis 2: 21-22.

This part of the Genesis describes the creation of woman from man. The Bible says that God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. Then, when Adam was asleep, God removed one of his ribs, and made a woman from that rib. Therefore, Adam would have had one less rib than Eve.

There is no evidence to indicate that all men born from Adam and Eve had one less rib.

The Mystery of Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene has been celebrated as a dedicated disciple, as a prostitute who turned her life around for Christ, as a symbol of someone who seeks forgiveness for her sins, and finally in the modern cinema, as the possible bride of Christ. Which of these stories (if any) are the true story of Mary Magdalene?

Most certainly, Mary was one of Christ's most dedicated disciples. She remained sobbing outside of his tomb. She was one of the first to see the risen Christ. Clearly, her presence was important to Jesus, and to God, for her to have such an honour bestowed upon her.

She is a symbol of the repentant Christian. Christ cast evil out of her body. She became saved in Christ. There is no evidence that she was ever a prostitute. There is also no evidence that she was married to Christ. When she saw the risen Christ, in amazement she shouted out, "Rabboni", which meant "my great teacher". That is hardly something that a wife would say to her husband if he suddenly rose from the dead!

Senior Sunday
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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
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The Name of the Game is
Jesus!

Bible Humour by Anonymous

GOD IS GREAT!

A boy was sitting on a park bench with one hand resting on an open Bible. He was loudly exclaiming his praise to God. "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! God is great!" he yelled without worrying whether anyone heard him or not.

Shortly after, along came a man who had recently completed some studies at a local university. Feeling himself very enlightened in the ways of truth and very eager to show this enlightenment, he asked the boy about the source of his joy.

"Hey" asked the boy in return with a bright laugh, "Don't you have any idea what God is able to do? I just read that God opened up the waves of the Red Sea and led the whole nation of Israel right through the middle."

The enlightened man laughed lightly, sat down next to the boy and began to try to open his eyes to the "realities" of the miracles of the Bible. "That can all be very easily explained. Modern scholarship has shown that the Red Sea in that area was only 10 inches deep at that time. It was no problem for the Israelites to wade across."

The boy was stumped. His eyes wandered from the man back to the Bible laying open in his lap. The man, content that he had enlightened a poor, naive young person to the finer points of scientific insight, turned to go. Scarcely had he taken two steps when the boy began to rejoice and praise louder than before. The man turned to ask the reason for this resumed jubilation.

"Wow!" exclaimed the boy happily, "God is greater than I thought! Not only did He lead the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea, He topped it off by drowning the whole Egyptian army in 10 inches of water!"

Inspirational Present-Day Christian Women by Sandra God's Women in Action in Hammonds Plains

I invite you on a brief journey. We're travelling down the Hammonds Plains Road, probably on foot. No fast moving cars, no blinding headlights. It's June 28, 1933 about 7 p.m. We're headed for the First Baptist parsonage. When we arrive, Mrs. Ethel Jones greets us. She's our pastor's wife. She leads us to the parlour, and we meet three other women. They are engaged in serious conversation about a new topic – missions.

It has been only a few decades now since Hannah Maria Norris, of Canso, appealed to prominent Nova Scotian businessmen like Charles Tupper for funding for the unthinkable: a woman travelling alone to Burma to help people. They sympathized with her, but couldn't come up with the funds, so she had barnstormed her way across the Maritimes, organizing thirty-two new groups called Women's Missionary Societies. And now, in 1933, these societies are springing up in churches everywhere.

Mrs. Jones wants us to be one of these churches. Attempts were initiated before, but didn't succeed. So, strategies are developed. They form a "look out" committee. It's aim: to look for new members. It works. In the first year and a half membership jumps from four to seventeen. One of the recruits from that first "look out" committee was a young Miss Lena Eisenhauer, now Lena Smith, and Lena's been "looking out" for us ever since.

And they begin holding meetings in the homes of women who are bedridden. Olive Thomson, now Olive Romans, another early recruit, had already attended meetings before becoming a member because, as a young girl she helped entertain the ladies coming to her mother's bedside when her mother was ill with cancer.

It's Depression Era. Not an easy time to be generous. People are starving in the east; crops are failing in the west. But two barrels and one box of clothes are sent from this community to prairie farmers. A young Baptist pastor, Rev. Douglas of Weyburn, Saskatchewan thanks us in a letter to the WMS. That young preacher later went into politics. We now know him as T.C. Douglas, former NDP leader, named by the CBC as Canada's greatest Canadian, and father of our national health care system. Now we have something for which to thank him!

So as we leave the parsonage and say good night to Mrs. Jones, we might want to encourage her that, indeed, this time, her plans will succeed. That for the next seven decades, the church women will entertain missionaries from all over the globe in our homes, in the parsonage, and in the pulpit. And we might want to encourage her that the earlier generosity will prevail in the area of "home missions" as well: whether it's providing mittens to children, baby clothes to local crisis centres, or Bibles to the Gideons.

This month our society celebrated its 75th anniversary, and we are still blessed to rely on the counsel of some of our founding members: Lena and Olive. It was through the continued guidance of Lena, who now lives in Sackville, Olive, who lives in Halifax, and so many others like Mrs. Ethel Jones. They have led us throughout the 20th century, and their inspiration will continue to lead us in the 21st century.

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