

Devoted

30 DAYS WITH WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

A photograph of three women walking away from the camera in a field of tall grass and red poppies. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon behind them. The woman on the left wears a wide-brimmed straw hat and a light-colored sweater. The woman in the middle has long blonde hair and wears a dark sweater. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and wears a blue denim jumpsuit, carrying a bouquet of flowers. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

LIFEWAY WOMEN

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LIFEWAY WOMEN

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How to Use This Study

Welcome! We're so glad you've picked up this book. *Devoted* is a six-week Bible study on influential women in Scripture. Over the course of the study, you'll learn from the examples of more than thirty women whose lives have inspired generations of people in their faith and devotion to God. Here's a look at what you can expect.



GETTING STARTED

Devoted is divided into six weeks of study; the first three weeks focus on women in the Old Testament, and the last three weeks cover women in the New Testament. The weeks are divided into five days of study, but we encourage you to take it at your own pace. We know some days are busier than others!

PERSONAL STUDY

This is a multi-contributor study, so each day is written by a different woman. As you study, you'll encounter guided reading of Bible passages, commentary to help you understand what you've read, and questions that encourage you to engage with the Bible and apply its truths to your life.





REFLECT

We've set aside time at the end of each week for you to process what God revealed to you during that week of study. Whether you're studying on your own or with others, this gives you the chance to reflect on the character of God and your relationship with Him.

LOOKING FOR MORE?

If you're leading a group or looking for questions to discuss with a friend, don't miss the free leader guide PDF available for download at lifeway.com/devoted. While you're there, check out the group promotional resources!



A NOTE ABOUT BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

This study will primarily use the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) and the English Standard Version (ESV) translations of the Bible. Reading the same passage of Scripture from more than one translation is a helpful study tool, and you can find these translations and others on a Bible app or websites such as biblegateway.com or biblehub.com.

The names of the Bible books will be abbreviated when referenced in parentheses in this study. For a complete list of book abbreviations, download the chart available at lifeway.com/devoted.



Introduction

Perfection. From the way our shampoo is advertised to the facade we present on social media, the pursuit of perfection is the hidden heartbeat of femininity. And it's exhausting! The messages we're bombarded with every day have a way of seeping into our souls, complicating our sense of value, and distracting us from worthwhile pursuits.

But hear this: God doesn't care if we are perfect or if we have it all together. In fact, He knows we can't be, and we don't. When pressed on what a "perfect" relationship with God looks like, Jesus had this to say: "If you want to be perfect . . . go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. *Then come, follow me*" (Matt. 19:21, emphasis added).

Despite what you've heard, the perfect life isn't about the way you look, how hard you work, parenting style, number of followers, or number of grandkids. It's about following Jesus—living a life of devotion to Him and extending His love to others (Matt. 22:37-39).

Have you ever noticed the many personal, often muddy details God includes about the women and men who are part of His story? Perhaps He wants to reassure us that like them, we don't have to have it all together either. Perfection is not a prerequisite for receiving God's love or being a part of God's work!

Over the next six weeks, we'll walk through Scripture as we examine the stories of women included in God's Word. None of the women were flawless. Some are remembered for their high points, others are remembered for their lows, and for all of them, we are left with only the briefest of snapshots from their complicated lives. But when you string these pictures together, one thing is clear: *Every one of these women played a role in God's story, a role He deemed worthy of remembering.*

My hope is that their stories will encourage you to look to Jesus, to know with confidence that He loves you, and to live "*wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD our God*" (1 Kings 8:61). Like each of these women, you play an invaluable part in His story, and your life is a picture for others of His kindness and His love.

Laura Magness



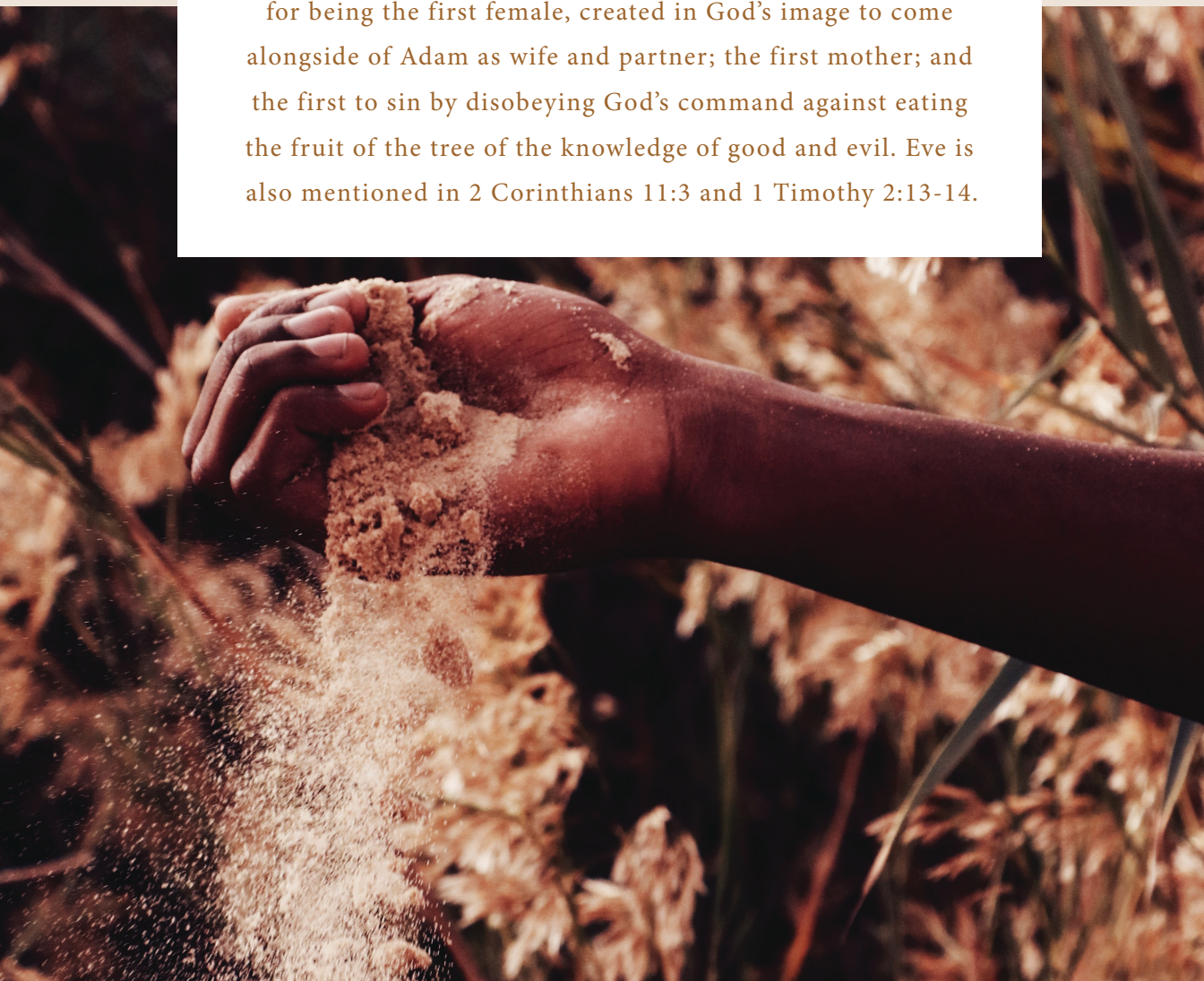
DAY 01

Eve

CREATED BY GOD

by Donna Gaines

Eve's story is found in Genesis 1:26–4:26. She is best known for being the first female, created in God's image to come alongside of Adam as wife and partner; the first mother; and the first to sin by disobeying God's command against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve is also mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14.



In our current culture, there is much confusion over what it means to be male or female. In fact, most people would have a hard time defining exactly what it means to be a woman. As a woman, the mother of three daughters and grandmother of eight granddaughters, I want to get this right! The one way to clear up the confusion is to go back to God's original design. God clearly communicates His intentions and purpose for creating humanity—both males and females—in Genesis 1–2.

Before we dig into Eve's story, let's lay some groundwork. As you read, I want you to notice how God introduced Himself from the very beginning as the Creator and Sustainer of life. He planned for life to work according to His design and for our flourishing.

TAKE YOUR TIME TO READ THROUGH GENESIS 1–2.

With Genesis 1 readers are given the thirty-thousand-foot view of creation. In rapid succession we read about the beginning of everything from light to darkness, birds of the air to fish of the sea, and everything in between. Genesis 2, on the other hand, zooms in and gives us a few more details. Both chapters reveal very important information about our origin as women.

REREAD GENESIS 1:26-28 AND GENESIS 2:7,18-25.

List everything you learn about the creation of man and woman from these verses of Scripture.

Where did God place Adam, and what one rule did He give him (Gen. 2:8,16-17)?

God created Adam and Eve on day six of creation (Gen. 1:26-31). They were created in God's image and given a blessing and command to be fruitful and multiply and to fill and subdue the earth. They were given dominion over all that God had created. In Genesis 2, we are told God created Adam out of the dust of the ground. He fashioned him into a man and breathed the breath of life into him. Adam became a living soul. Being created in the image of God is what sets men and women apart from animals and the rest of creation.

READ GENESIS 2:18-25 AGAIN. What word is used to describe Eve in verse 18?

In verse 18, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone, and He created a “helper” for Adam. Here, along with Genesis 1:27, we see God’s creation of distinct and complementary genders, male and female. Genesis 2:18 is easily misunderstood to imply women are inferior to men, but nothing could be further from the truth. The word translated “helper” is *ezer* in the Hebrew. Consider this understanding of the term:

Thinking regarding the *ezer* began to change when scholars pointed out that the word *ezer* is used most often (sixteen out of twenty-one occurrences) in the Old Testament to refer to God as Israel’s helper in times of trouble . . . The *ezer* is a warrior, and this has far-reaching implications for women, not only in marriage, but in every relationship, season, and walk of life.¹

Eve, just like Adam, was an image-bearer of God. God knew the work He had given Adam would be impossible to do alone; he needed Eve. They were made to complement one another. And not until after Eve was made did God declare His creation “very good indeed” (Gen. 1:31). Created in the image of God as an *ezer* (helper), we are essential to God’s plan. We support the work He is doing in our churches, homes, local communities, and around the globe.

When you read about God’s creation of Eve, what stands out to you? How do these verses compare with the messages you’re hearing about gender and identity in culture today?

Many things may have crossed your mind as you reflected on Eve’s creation, but I want to draw your attention to two. First is the communal nature of God. The creation of Eve as a helper or companion for Adam reminds us of the Trinity—the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Community and relationships are a part of God’s very being, and they have been in our nature from the beginning, too. We are not meant to do life in isolation. Second, Paul in Ephesians 5 teaches us that Genesis 2:24 is actually about Christ and His church. Not only does the relationship between Adam and Eve model God’s relationship with Himself, it models the relationship He desires to have with you and me.

NOW READ GENESIS 3:1-19. Look closely at Genesis 3:4-5. Summarize the serpent's deception. How did he entice Eve? Why do you think Eve succumbed to the temptation?

The enemy's tactics have not changed. Just as he tempted Eve to doubt and deny the word of God, he also whispers doubts into our ears. Essentially, he told Eve that God was not good, that He was holding out on her. If she would break God's one rule, she could be like God. We have been trying to be God ever since. What did Adam and Eve gain by disobeying God's one rule? Separation from God—an unimaginable consequence—which led to things like fear, guilt, shame, separation in their relationship with each other, and ultimately, death. The Bible is clear that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Adam and Eve's sin did not just affect them. Their sin was passed to their children. In Genesis 4, Eve's role as the first mother is overshadowed by the wages of sin as her son Cain killed his brother Abel. And this is the pattern that continues even today.

REREAD GENESIS 3:15, AND READ 3:20-24. What do God's actions following the first sin teach you about Him?

God killed an animal that He had declared good to cover Adam and Eve. Here we see the mercy of God as well as His provision. This animal foreshadowed Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. Christ's blood covers us from our sin, and we are now clothed in His righteousness. Jesus was also in view in God's curse of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). He will destroy Satan, the serpent, once and for all (Rev. 20). Because God is good and only does good, we can give Him thanks. God has provided "the way" (John 14:6) for us to be in right relationship with Him. Cling to Jesus. Allow Him to redeem your story. Let's learn from Eve. As you'll see in the days to come, the story of every woman in the Bible—and your story and my story—is influenced by Eve.

End your study today with a time of reflection and prayer. How does Eve's story impact your own relationship with and devotion to God?

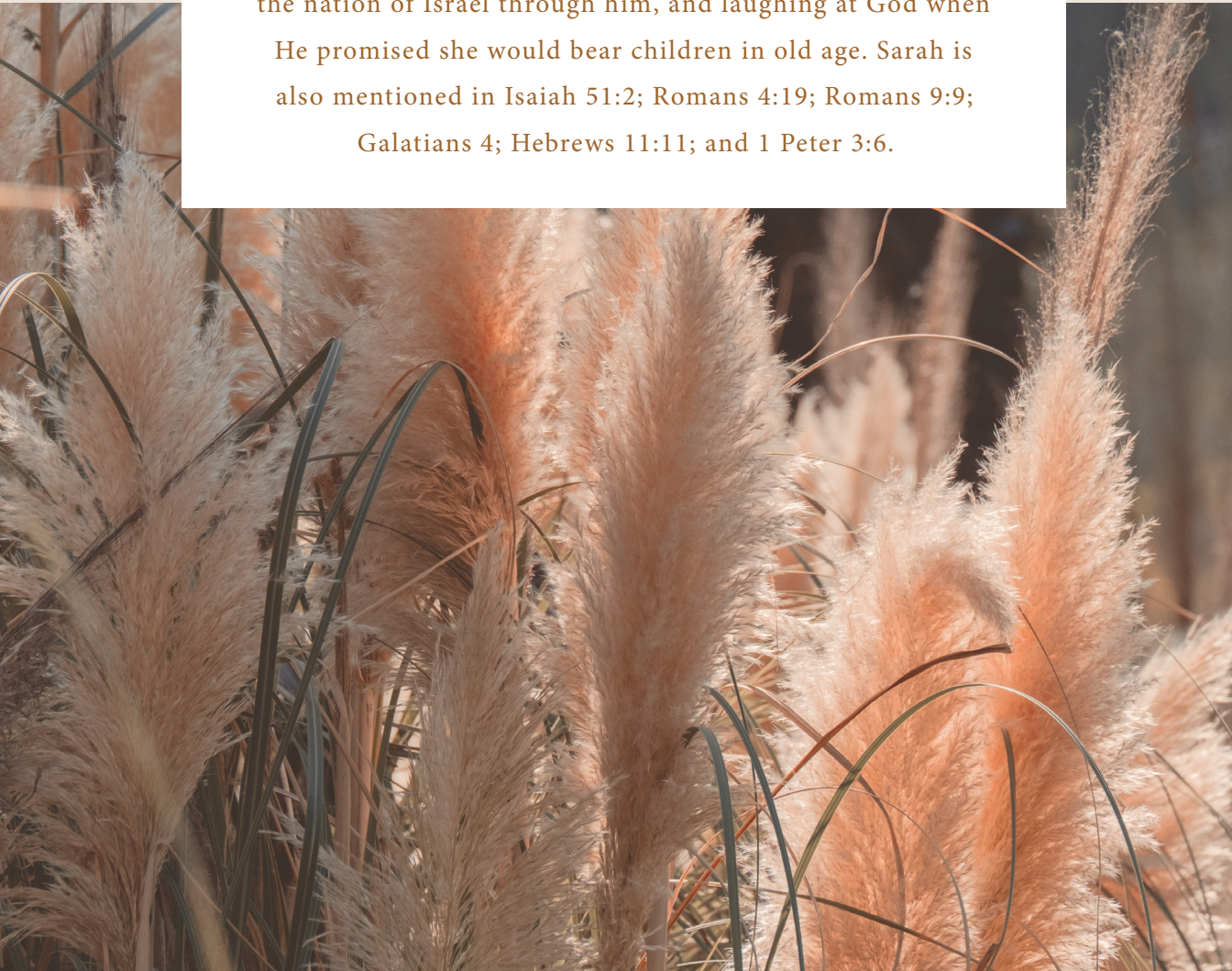
DAY 02

Sarah

CHOSEN BY GOD

by Mary C. Wiley

Sarah's story is found in Genesis 11–25. She is best known for being married to Abraham, being mother to Isaac and the nation of Israel through him, and laughing at God when He promised she would bear children in old age. Sarah is also mentioned in Isaiah 51:2; Romans 4:19; Romans 9:9; Galatians 4; Hebrews 11:11; and 1 Peter 3:6.



While Gen Z and Millennials likely feel this pressure most acutely, it's no secret that social media algorithms encourage us to carefully cultivate personal "brands." The algorithm loves a perfect aesthetic and singular focus. But behind every beautiful set of photos is a real person with real emotions, dreams, fears, faithfulness, and doubt. People are far more complicated than a screen communicates.

Similarly, as we read the story of Abram and Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah), there are thousands of days we don't get to see lived. It's easy to forget Sarah was a real person living in a particular time. I'll be the first to admit I'm not always a huge fan of hers, but God highlights her faith for us (Heb. 11:11). She's complicated with faithfulness and failings, as are you and me.

READ GENESIS 12:1-5 AND GENESIS 15:1-6.

The book of Genesis records the stories of the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were God's chosen family through whom the nation of Israel, and eventually the Messiah, would come. This Messiah was the Savior God promised in Genesis 3:15, the One who would fix what broke when Eve sinned. Abram was the first patriarch, and Sarai was his wife.

Look up the word *bless* in a dictionary and then come up with your own definition.

God promised to make Abram into "a great nation," to "make [his] name great," and to bless others through him. This blessing stands in direct opposition to the curse, given in Genesis 3. After sin separated people from God, here we see that the Promise-Maker is establishing Himself as the One who will do all the work of drawing them back to Himself; and He planned to use Abram and Sarai in that process.

We don't know what the conversation was like between Abram and Sarai after God called them to uproot their lives, but we know they obeyed, setting out toward Canaan with all their possessions, likely without intentions to return. And when God later repeated these promises and provided Abram with more details, he "believed the LORD" (Gen. 15:6). God made Himself known, and obedience was Abram and Sarai's response.

Think about a time when God clearly intervened in your life. Did you respond with obedience and faith, or did you choose not to listen?

READ GENESIS 16:1-6.

Sarai was barren, which often brought deep shame on people who lived in an agrarian society that highly valued having heirs who could join in the difficult job of working the land. Considering her old age, Sarai devised a plan to secure the offspring God had promised Abram. It would not have been unusual for children to be born in this way, through a surrogate of sorts. Yet, it is framed as unwise here because the motive was to take the fulfillment of God's promise into their own hands.

Who did Sarai say had kept her from having children?

How many years had passed since God initially promised to bless Abram's offspring (Gen. 12; 15)?

We can imagine Sarai's frustration. It's been quite some time since this promise was made, and she's well beyond child-bearing years; even if she was able to have children it would have been seemingly impossible at her age. For her to have children now would only be possible if God worked a miracle.

What do you learn about Sarai here? About her relationship with God? Note any similarities you see between Sarai and Eve.

We'll look more closely at the ramifications of Sarai's plan tomorrow when we study Hagar. But for now, let's focus on Sarai. Like Eve, Sarai failed to trust God and instead took matters into her own hands. Also like Eve, she was quick to blame her husband for the consequences of her own mistakes.² The patterns of sin in the early chapters of Genesis are the same patterns we see in our own lives today, aren't they? When Sarai's plan succeeded, chaos ensued. Sarai's treatment of Hagar brought about contempt, and Hagar's contempt for Sarai brought about regret. Sarai blamed Abram, everything spiraled, and eventually Hagar fled.

READ GENESIS 17:1-22; GENESIS 18:10-15; AND GENESIS 21:1-7.

To Abram and Sarai, the delay in fulfillment of God's promise led to doubt and impatience, but God had not forgotten. God reestablished His covenant with Abram, giving him and Sarai new names—Abraham and Sarah—and ultimately new identities as the parents of a chosen nation (Gen. 17). Then one day, Sarah and Abraham received God's promise (Gen. 21), but it was bigger than they could have imagined. Eventually, God would bless all the world in Christ, the offspring (Gen. 3:15) who would come from their lineage (Matt. 1). God's faithfulness never falters.

READ GALATIANS 4:21-31 AND HEBREWS 11:11-19. How does Sarah's story fit into the bigger story of Scripture, the story of God's redemptive work to draw us back to Him?

Galatians 4:21-31 reveals Sarah as an illustration of the new covenant, or the new relationship between God and His people, in Christ. We are her children, miraculously born out of barrenness into freedom. All of this is through the work of God alone. He is the Enactor of the covenant, the Provider of the means, and the Giver of freedom. Hebrews 11 paints Sarah as having lived in faith, despite her missteps and sins. All would be blessed through her because Jesus would be born from her lineage. God would faithfully keep His promise in both giving Isaac and sending Jesus. His call was simply trust and patience. The call for trust and patience is also our call today.

End your study today with a time of reflection and prayer. How is your faith challenged by Sarah's example and the examples of God's faithfulness you see in her story?

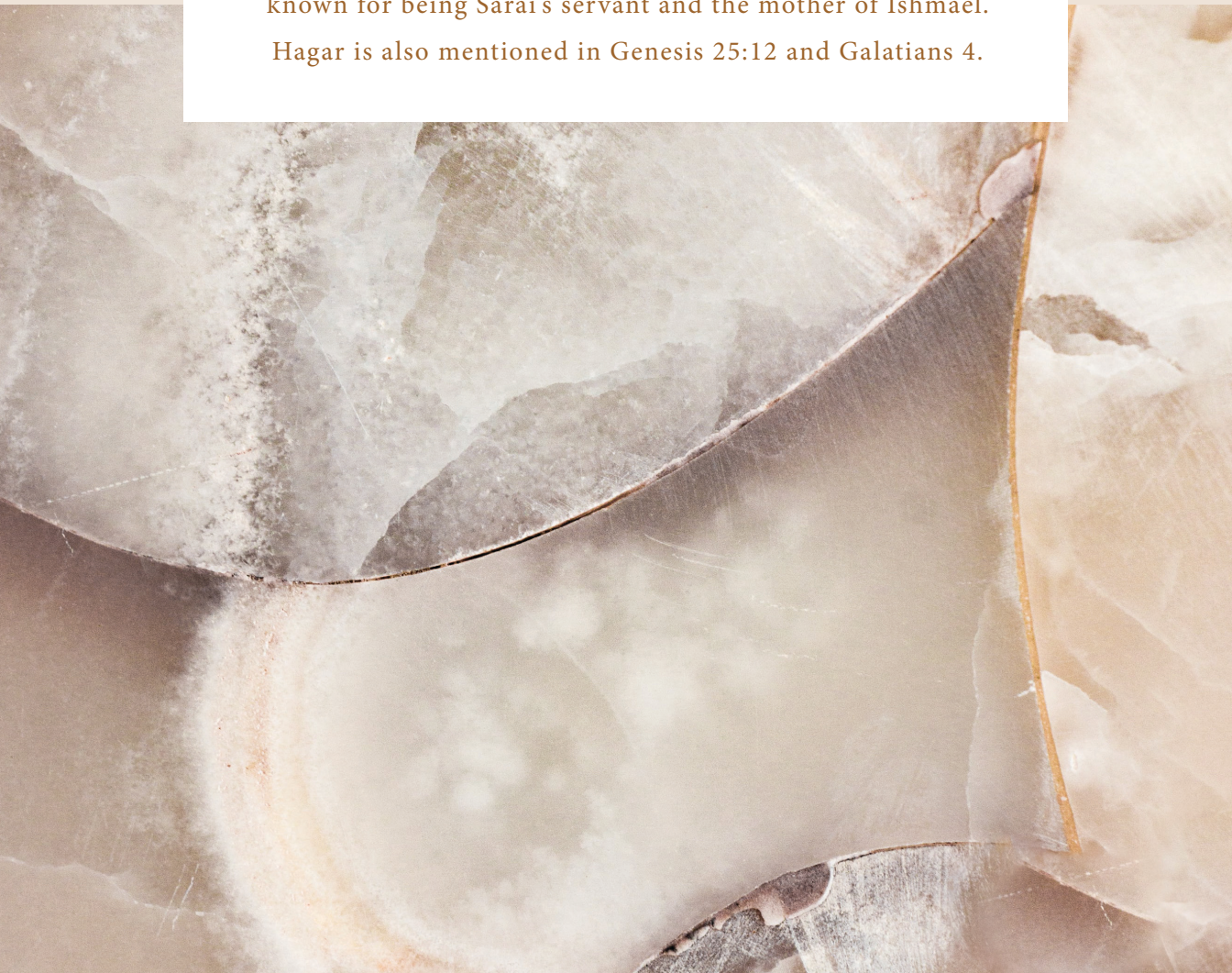
DAY 03

Hagar

SEEN BY GOD

by Elizabeth Hyndman

Hagar's story is found in Genesis 16 and Genesis 21. She is best known for being Sarai's servant and the mother of Ishmael. Hagar is also mentioned in Genesis 25:12 and Galatians 4.



In Genesis 2, we read about man's first assignment: naming the animals. I would love more details here. I want to know things like how Adam chose names and what the language was like then. I can get lost in these questions for quite a while, but my point here is that from the beginning, naming has been important; it's worthy of three verses (Gen. 2:19-20; 3:20) in the brief creation narrative. In today's study, we'll look at a woman who gave God a name. And *her name* was Hagar.

READ GENESIS 16:1-6. These are verses you looked at yesterday from Sarai's perspective. Today let's consider Hagar. Who was she? List everything you know about her from these verses.

We don't know for sure, but many scholars believe Hagar was probably acquired as a servant for Sarai during her time in Egypt. The word translated *slave* or *servant* in Genesis 16:1 indicates that Hagar was most likely a personal servant of Sarai's, not a common household slave. This gave Sarai the authority to command her.³ While the practice of having a slave become a surrogate wasn't completely out of the ordinary at the time, Scripture makes it clear that Sarai's offering of Hagar to Abram was wrong. In Genesis 15, God promised Abram that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars. Genesis 15:6 says that Abram believed God. However, in the very next chapter, he trusted Sarai's impatience over God's timing. Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant.

You considered this briefly yesterday, but look more closely at Genesis 16:4-6. What happened to the relationship between Sarai and Hagar once Hagar knew she was carrying Abram's child? How was Hagar personally affected by Sarai's decisions?

Hagar looked upon Sarai with contempt (v. 4). We don't know what that looked like and can only imagine the specifics, but we do know that Sarai blamed Abram for Hagar's contempt of her (v. 5). Abram told Sarai to do what she wanted with her servant; this was a reversal of roles for Hagar—from Abram's "wife" (16:3) and the mother of his child back to the servant of his wife. Sarai mistreated Hagar, so Hagar ran away (v. 6).

READ GENESIS 16:7-16. Make a list of all the actions attributed to the angel of the LORD/the LORD in these verses.

After Hagar left Sarai's, we're told "the angel of the LORD found her by a spring in the wilderness" (v. 7). We don't know who the angel of the LORD is in this passage. *Angel* literally means *messenger*, so it could be that this is a messenger of God. Some scholars believe that the angel of the LORD in this passage is the preincarnate Christ, meaning the Son of God before He took on flesh and dwelt among us. The way the angel of the LORD was spoken to and spoken of in this passage does seem to support the belief that "the angel of the LORD" in this case is divine.⁴ The angel of the LORD found Hagar. He spoke to her. He heard her. God is almighty, sovereign, all-knowing, and all-powerful. He is also personal. He came to a young slave woman on the run and spoke to her. Let that sink in for a second.

What promises did the angel of the LORD make to Hagar?
Why would those promises be important for her, based on what you know about her life?

Hagar came from a world where the gods "did not reveal their natures."⁵ They were far-off; the God of Abraham came close. Not only that, but He gave a promise to Hagar. He told her to name her son Ishmael, which means "God hears." He said her son would be like "a wild donkey" and would "settle near all his relatives." The *ESV Study Bible* points out that this shows Ishmael's life would be unlike his mother's—enslaved in a foreign land. Instead, he would be independent but live a life in hostility toward others.⁶

REREAD GENESIS 16:13. What name did Hagar give to God, and what did it mean?

What does Hagar’s story tell you about God? What emotions does her story stir up in your heart?

In verse 15, we learn another important aspect of Hagar’s story. She had a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. Fast forward in Hagar’s story. Sarah and Abraham have new names and a new son, Isaac.

NOW READ GENESIS 21:8-21.

Once again, we find Hagar hopeless and in the wilderness. This time, Ishmael is with her, and it doesn’t look like they’ll survive. In verse 17, we read that “God heard the boy crying.”

COMPARE GENESIS 21:8-21 WITH GENESIS 16:7-16. How does the passage in Genesis 21 call back to and fulfill the passage in Genesis 16?

In both cases, Hagar found herself in the wilderness due to wrong behavior toward Sarah. The first time, she treated Sarah with contempt; the second time Ishmael mocked Sarah’s son. In each scene, God approached Hagar. He saw her and heard her. Hagar’s name means “flight.” It’s possible it has roots in the word for “stranger” or “foreigner” as well.⁷ Hagar was a slave, a stranger, a flee-er, and God saw her. You and I were also slaves, trapped in our slavery to sin, and God saw us. And He has set us free through Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham.

How are you comforted today by the truth that God sees, knows, and loves you?

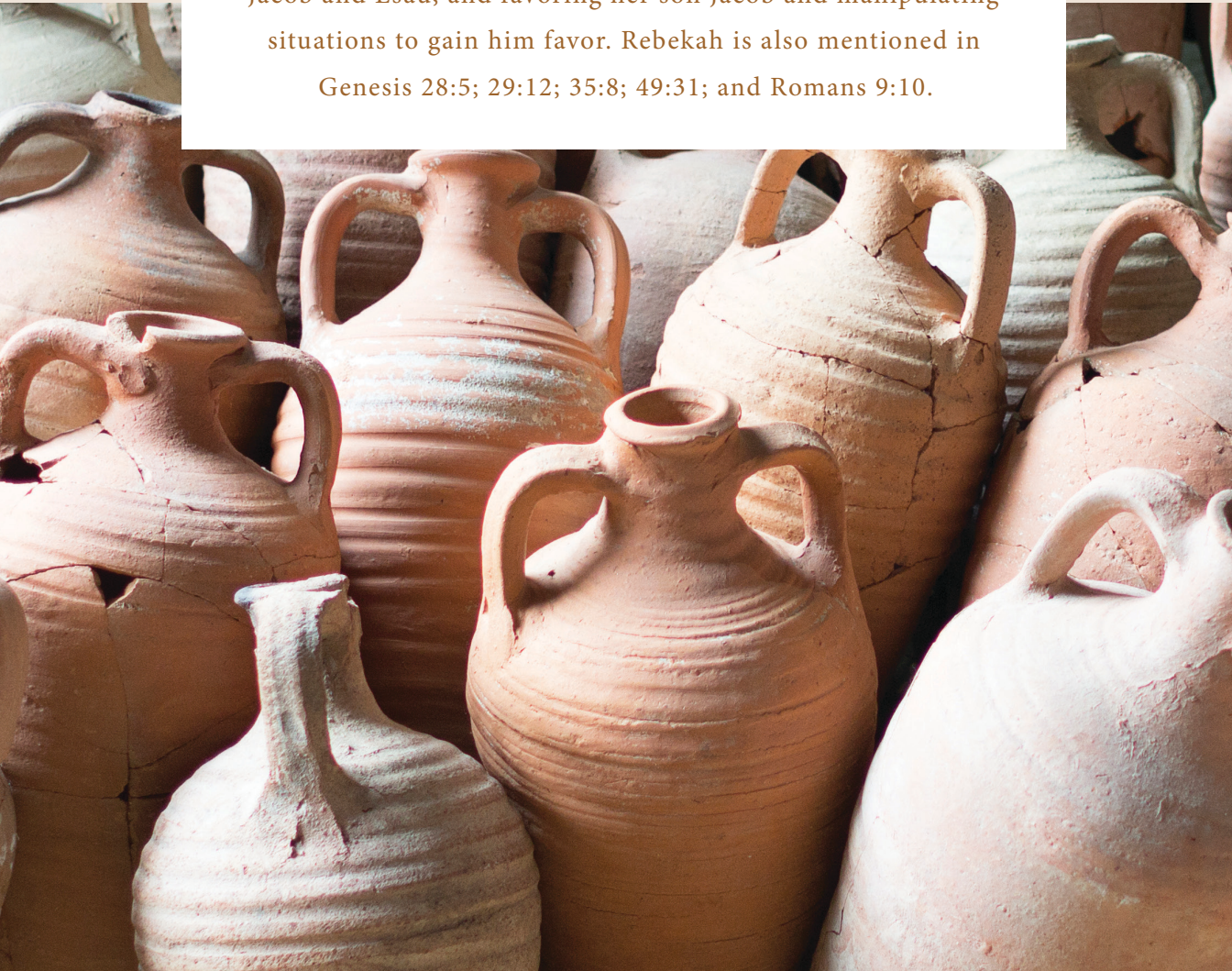
Spend a moment in prayer. Thank God for including Hagar’s story in Scripture. Praise Him for being the God who sees us and the God who hears us in our distress. Confess any wrong behaviors, knowing that our heavenly Father is a personal and loving God who sees you.

Rebekah

USED BY GOD

by Rachel Matheis Shaver

Rebekah's story is found in Genesis 24–28. She is best known for being married to Isaac, Abraham's son; mother to twins Jacob and Esau; and favoring her son Jacob and manipulating situations to gain him favor. Rebekah is also mentioned in Genesis 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; and Romans 9:10.



Let me start by saying that we are going to cover *a whole lot of ground* in Genesis as we look at Rebekah's story today. Stick with me! I'll point out the parts that will help you connect the dots and do my best to summarize chapters so you'll finish today's study learning a lot about the role Rebekah played in God's redemptive plan for His people through Jesus.

LET'S BEGIN BY READING ALL OF GENESIS 22. Then reread verses 17-18. What did God promise Abraham? Write His promise to Abraham below. We will come back to this again and again.

Rebekah's story begins here in Genesis 22:23, chapters before we learn about her. Bethuel is the father of Rebekah, and Bethuel is also the nephew of Abraham.

NOW READ ALL OF GENESIS 24. Write down any observations you have about how you see God at work in this part of Rebekah's story.

Sometime after Sarah died, Abraham set out to find a wife for their son, Isaac. He wanted Isaac's wife to not be from Canaan but from his homeland and more specifically, from his family. So, Abraham gave his servant very specific instructions and sent him on his way. The servant knew this was a monumental task. He prayed to God a very specific prayer for help finding the right wife for Isaac. He wanted to be certain he was acting within the will of God. And over and over again in Genesis 24 we see confirmation that he was.

God knew Abraham's commitment to their covenant, He knew the servant's heart to honor his master, and He knew exactly where Rebekah should be at exactly the right time, "before [the servant] had finished speaking" (v. 15). God heard the servant's specific prayer and gave a specific answer. God didn't leave any room for confusion. He saw the exact need and provided perfectly.

When was the last time God answered a specific prayer of yours?
How did you respond?

What a great God we serve. When we pray, God hears us. When we have a need, God is able to provide. When He provides, our response should be worship in the form of gratitude, like the servant did (Gen. 24:26-27). It's easy for us to feel like God doesn't care about the details of our individual lives in this grand narrative of His, but there isn't anything further from the truth. He sees. He hears. He is in the details. And He provides perfectly.

REREAD GENESIS 24:60 AND GENESIS 22:17-18.

What do you notice?

They're almost exactly the same. There's no indication that Rebekah's family knew of the covenant God made with Abraham, yet here God was providing a reminder to this budding family and to us thousands of years later that He knew exactly what He was doing, perfectly.

Since we can't dive too deep into Rebekah's story in the limited time we have today, use this chart to examine some of her key moments. (If or when you have the time, read through all of Genesis 24–28.)

Bible Passage	Observations about Rebekah, her relationship with her family, and/or her role in God's bigger story
Genesis 25:19-26	
Genesis 27:1-40	

Bible Passage	Observations about Rebekah, her relationship with her family, and/or her role in God's bigger story
Genesis 27:41–28:9	
Genesis 49:28-32	

Like many of the women in Scripture, some of Rebekah’s high points and some of her low points have been preserved for us. Rebekah struggled to become pregnant, similarly to her mother-in-law, Sarah. Isaac went to the Lord on her behalf, and God was receptive to his prayer. Rebekah became pregnant with twins, Esau and Jacob. Chapter 26 has Isaac and Rebekah moving because of a famine, and chapter 27 has Rebekah and Jacob stealing a blessing meant for Esau from an old and blind Isaac (most definitely not her finest moment). Because of this, Esau conspired to kill his brother, and chapter 28 opens with Isaac and Rebekah sending Jacob away, back to the land of his mother. Sin wreaks havoc on family relationships, but God is faithful to His promises.

FLIP OVER TO MATTHEW 1:1-17, which chronicles the genealogy of Jesus, and read it now. Rebekah isn’t mentioned in the genealogy, but which verse is she part of?

Rebekah was the grandmother of the twelve tribes of Israel (“Judah and his brothers,” Matt. 1:2). More importantly, Jesus—the Savior of the world—was born to a descendant of Rebekah and Isaac. Remember the promise that God made to Abraham back at the beginning of our study today?

I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command.

GENESIS 22:17-18

We've read about Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and their many descendants. But as numerous as the stars of the sky and sand? That's a tall promise. But God . . .

And if you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

GALATIANS 3:29

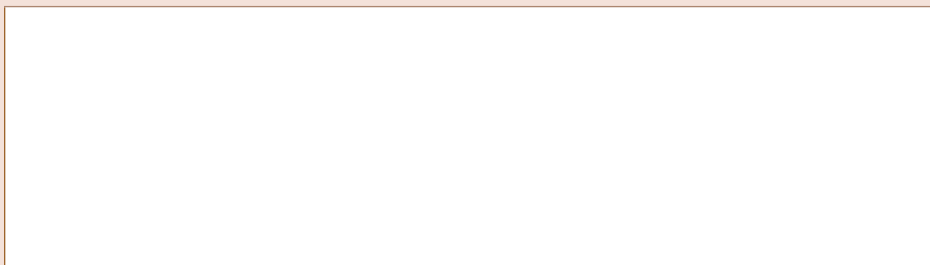
Did you catch that? If you call Christ your Savior, then God's promise to Abraham is a promise that He made to all of us; for because of Jesus, we are all heirs of a new promise that He ushered in with His death and resurrection. Remember the blessing Rebekah's family gave her as she went away to be Isaac's wife that sounded strangely like the covenant God made with Abraham?

After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

REVELATION 7:9-10

The family that God promised to Abraham? It's all of us who have been sealed by a promise, secured by the death of God's Son, Jesus. Because of God's infinite mercy and grace, we claim an eternal inheritance. God's plan all along was for Rebekah to help usher in generations that fulfill God's promise made to her father-in-law. The amount of detail and care that God has woven into this grand narrative tells us so much about who He is—our compassionate, promise-keeping God. Every single detail of our lives? What has been and what will be? He knows, sees, and cares.

What is weighing your heart down? Give it to God, and trust Him to work it out for you. Thank Him for being in every detail of your every day.



God sees.

God hears.

God is in

*the
details.*



Rachel & Leah

REMEMBERED BY GOD

by Amanda Mejias

Rachel's story is found in Genesis 29–35. She is best known for being sister to Leah, married to Jacob, mother to Joseph and Benjamin, and one of the mothers of the tribes of Israel. Rachel is also mentioned in Genesis 46:19-25; Genesis 48:7; Ruth 4:11; Jeremiah 31:15; and Matthew 2:18.

Leah's story is found in Genesis 29–35. She is best known for being sister to Rachel, married to Jacob through her father's deception, and mother to six of the tribes of Israel, including the tribe of Judah which would be the line of Jesus. Leah is also mentioned in Genesis 46:15-18; Genesis 49:31; and Ruth 4:11.

If you told me four years ago where I'd be today, I wouldn't believe you. At that time, I was six months pregnant and terrified of becoming a new mom, and I was working a ministry job that completely drained me spiritually and emotionally. My husband worked alongside me, and I wondered daily if he would ever be happy again. Even though we were surrounded by so many loving friends, it was a dark and lonely season for me. I felt like God had forgotten me. I remembered praying often and telling Him things like, *Was going to seminary just a waste of my time? I don't want to be a mom yet; I'm not ready. Why did You put this passion in my heart if You're never going to let me do anything with it? GOD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!*

Have you ever had a time in life when you felt similarly? Reflect on it and note what you remember your attitude toward God being like.

In Genesis 29 and 30, we meet Rachel and Leah—two sisters in unique and undesirable situations. They were both the wives of Jacob, yet one longed for the affection of her husband while the other desperately wanted to bear children. And even though they were each richly blessed in unique areas, they could not focus on anything but what they didn't have and how God had seemingly forgotten to come through for them.

READ GENESIS 29:13-35 AND 30:1-16. What was the desire of Leah's heart? What did Rachel long for?

How did each sister try to take matters into her own hands?

I relate to Rachel and Leah more than I'd like to admit. I sympathize with their longings and discontentment, because I know what it's like to have unanswered prayers and unmet desires. We're still in the first book of the Bible, and already patterns of behavior are developing that we recognize in our own lives and relationships. I know how difficult it is to trust in God's goodness and sovereignty when life doesn't make sense or is just plain miserable. I often try to become my own

god and manipulate the best solution or outcome as if I have the power to control my life or circumstances.

We are so easily convinced that we know better than God what we need and what is best for our lives. Leah and Rachel sure thought they knew what they needed. And honestly, who could blame a wife for wanting her husband's love or a woman for wanting to have children? Those things seem like wonderful and godly desires to have! Why on earth would God want to withhold such good things? Wait. But does He *really* withhold good things?

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES, and write down what each Scripture says.

Psalm 84:11	
Matthew 7:7-11	

OK, so if God doesn't withhold good things from His children, what was He doing with Rachel and Leah? While we know that both sisters had unanswered desires, we can see in Scripture that God involved them in His good plan.

READ MATTHEW 1:1-17. Like Rebekah, Rachel and Leah are not named in Jesus's genealogy, but they are there. Which verse gives a nod to their roles in God's salvation story?

Rachel and Leah would never know the full story God was writing for them and their children. They would never know how God would write their names and stories into Scripture. They would have no idea their sons would become heads of some of the leading tribes of Israel (Gen. 49:1-28) They wouldn't believe that one of Rachel's sons would be Jacob's personal favorite and become ruler over Egypt (Gen. 41). And they would never expect that Judah, the son of the less beautiful and less loved Leah, would one day be the family line into which the Savior of the world would be born (Matt. 1:2).

The danger for us is to assume that if we wait long enough, God will eventually give us what we think He's withholding from us. I imagine all of us have learned the hard way that simply isn't the case. Whether God gives us what we're asking for or not, the point is that He is the One we ask. He is the One to whom we lament. And He is the One we trust to know what we really need in order to play our part in His story.

I'm reminded time and again of how Isaiah 55:8-9 says,

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the LORD's declaration. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God's ways are simply so much better than ours. His way is far greater than what I could have come up with for my own life, and it's better than any plan that Rachel and Leah could have forced or manipulated.

If you find yourself longing for God to come through, how does this truth impact the way you view God and wait on Him in this season?

Spend a few minutes in prayer. Confess any ways you have forgotten to trust God's goodness and sovereignty over your life or any areas where you're struggling with things like contentment, joy, or gratitude.



WEEK ONE

REFLECT

Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel & Leah

Take a few minutes to reflect on the truths you uncovered in your study of God’s Word this week. Journal any final thoughts below, or use the space to take notes during your Bible study group conversation. The three questions on the opposite page can be used for your personal reflection or group discussion.

Download the *Devoted* leader guide at lifeway.com/devoted

As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week,
what stands out to you about the character of God?

How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship
with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?

Write down one way you can use what you've
learned this week to encourage someone else.