

LUKE'S LADIES

A DEVOTIONAL BOOK BASED ON
THE WOMEN OF LUKE AND ACTS

BY
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FOREWORD BY ANN MAINSE

FOREWORD

Mary... Elizabeth... Anna ... The Widow of Nain... The “Alabaster woman”... Mary Magdalene. All flesh-and-blood women who share the distinction of having had first-hand encounters with Jesus, God-in-flesh. These are just a few of the individuals that Melissa Bone affectionately refers to as *Luke’s Ladies*, women whose stories are detailed in Luke’s writings about the life and ministry of Jesus. The insights we get into their lives, their brokenness, their Divine appointments, cause the centuries to melt away as we connect with them on a personal level. Like us, they were real women in need of an intimate touch from Jesus.

With intuitive insight and quiet respect, Melissa gently unpacks the details of each Lady’s story. She then invites us to experience life through their eyes, feel their pain, sense their fear, and ultimately recognize for ourselves how precious and unique a touch from Jesus can be.

I’ve known Melissa Bone for years and have had the privilege of sitting under her teaching as she helped the nation of Canada get to know *Luke’s Ladies* for the very first time when she was featured on *100 Huntley Street Full Circle*.

Grab a cup of tea and enjoy some quiet moments with Melissa and *Luke’s Ladies*.

Ann Mainse

Co-host, *100 Huntley Street*

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE'S LADIES

READING: LUKE 1:1-4

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

This little book of devotions is intended as an encouragement for women. It is based on the women of Luke and Acts and the histories that Luke wrote in the first century of Christianity.

Luke was a Greek physician, a contemporary of Paul's. He was a Gentile, the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew. He was a careful historian. He fully researched his topics: the life of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the history of the early Church. The books of Luke and Acts were written to a man called Theophilus whose name means, "One who loves God". He was most likely a high official in the Roman government of the time.

Luke was not simply a biographer. His concern was to extract the truth of what happened in the important years of Jesus' life-time. Luke's Gospel reveals Jesus as the Saviour of all men and women. He allows us to see Jesus, the Man, and how he related with all people, including women. More women are featured in Luke's writings than in any of the other Gospels. We will follow "Luke's Ladies" through the Gospel of Luke as well as Acts, Luke's "second Gospel," as it is often referred to. There we will look at what happened after Jesus left this earth and ascended back to heaven, how the early Church began, and how women factored into the very beginnings of the Body of Christ, the Church here on earth.

How amazing it is that we have glimpses into the lives of real women in real life situations of almost 2000 years ago, thanks to Luke's writings! I hope you will be brought closer to Jesus as we look into the lives of the females featured in both of Luke's books – women from different ages and stages of life, poor women, rich women, sick women, doubting women, redeemed women; women who Jesus led to himself, and who followed him. I pray you will be encouraged as you read and study these women of Luke – "Luke's Ladies."

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for the Gospels and for the writers who wrote them. Thank you for Jesus who loved women so much he desired to lead them to himself. May I receive your truth for my life by looking into the lives of the women of Luke. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Day 3

ELIZABETH: A WOMAN OF FAITH

READING: GENESIS 21:1-3, GENESIS 25:21,
GENESIS 30:22, JUDGES 13, 1 SAMUEL 1

As we continue to look into the life of Elizabeth we see that although Luke tells us she was “blameless,” she still didn’t have all the desires of her heart. She was childless, and had been barren for many years. We assume that she was past child-bearing years.

To be barren, especially in Old Testament times, was considered to be under divine disfavour. The condition brought social reproach. It was (and still is in many cultures today) a reason for disdain and shunning by others. Elizabeth, a public figure because of her marriage to a priest, had lived her whole married life under this reproach. She and her husband had prayed fervently for a child, but only when it was Zechariah’s turn to go in and burn incense before the Lord did the angel Gabriel appear to him and tell him that their prayers had been answered. Not only would Elizabeth bear a son, but he would be a prophet – one called to “prepare the way of the Lord” ahead of Jesus. He was indeed to be a special, blessed child with a high and holy calling.

Our Bible readings today give examples of biblical barrenness and how God divinely answered a mother’s prayers for a child: Sarah bore Isaac, Rebekah bore Jacob and Esau, Rachel bore Joseph – all of who became patriarchs or leaders. Manoah’s wife bore Samson, a judge in Israel, and Hannah bore Samuel, the first prophet in Israel. God answered these women’s prayers and gave them special children who became prophets and world changers of their time.

John was such a person. He was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb (see Luke 1:15b). He had a unique calling not only as a child of promise after much longing and waiting, but a prophetic call for announcing great things to an entire nation. He would be instrumental in calling the nation of Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ,

his own relative.

Elizabeth was a woman of confidence and trust. She believed God, even when her husband was mute for the duration of her pregnancy. She named her baby John before Zechariah agreed with her in print (see Luke 1:60-63). She stands out as one of the great women of faith in the Gospels, and indeed, the entire Bible.

I have asked for, and agreed in prayer with a number of women who have struggled with infertility and miscarriage over the years, and we have seen and heard of amazing answers to prayer. If you struggle with this, may the Lord open your womb as you trust him like Elizabeth did. If you have been asking God for children, I bless your faith to conceive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

God's delay is not always God's denial. When there is a long delay in answers to prayer, we are often tempted to believe it's our fault, yet many other factors may be contributing to the wait. After enduring decades of delay and possible judgment by others, Elizabeth received an amazing answer to prayer. How does this impact your faith? Elizabeth believed God for answers when her husband doubted. What do you do as a wife/woman when you have a faith that your spouse does not share?

PRAYER:

Lord, help me be a woman of faith like Elizabeth. Help me stand fast in faith in spite of others around me who cannot believe. May it be done unto me according to your Word, as it was to Elizabeth. Amen.

Day 18

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND THE BLEEDING WOMAN

READING: LUKE 8:40-53

Interruptions! If medals were awarded for interrupting, our family would win Olympic gold! Sometimes we interrupt ourselves even as we interrupt each other! It has become an “art-form” in our home.

Jesus was a master non-interrupter. I want to be more like him. He also did not let interruptions phase him. Let's look at Luke 8 to see how Jesus mastered a few interruptions.

Jesus had just returned to a welcoming, expectant crowd after a famous boat trip with his disciples during which he had calmed the storm. He was suddenly interrupted by a man named Jairus whose daughter was dying. To Jairus, a father whose child was on the brink of life and death, this seemed like an urgent case, so he pleaded with Jesus to come to his house right away.

Imagine the scene – the crowds pressing against Jesus; Jesus himself almost crushed on all sides as he walked; a sea of humanity moving toward an appointment with a child's eternity. But suddenly there was another interruption, subtle at first, but so noteworthy that Luke stopped telling the story of Jairus' daughter to draw our attention temporarily in a different direction. In fact, he makes us stop dead in our tracks, just as Jesus did.

A woman with a chronic bleeding disorder had somehow pressed forward into the fray and managed to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Not much of an outer action, but it caused a huge inner reaction in Jesus. He asked a seemingly obvious yet unusual question: “Who touched me?” Everyone around denied it! Then Peter (of course) stated the apparent: “Umm... Master... the people are crowding and pressing against you.” But Jesus was talking about a different kind of touch, of a soul reaching out to receive from God. This kind of contact, between the human and the divine was palpable to Jesus. He actually said: “I know that power has gone out from me.” Where had it gone?

Into a woman – a powerless, broken, bleeding woman! A woman who had interrupted someone – someone who had not scolded her, or sloughed her off on his way to a seemingly greater emergency. On the contrary, he diverted all his attention to her, and eternity had to wait.

The woman came trembling, exposed to the crowd, and fell at his feet. She testified of her physical state, her shame, her pain, and her “female problem.” According to Levitical law, a woman was impure during her monthly period and at any other time of bleeding (see Leviticus 15:19-33, esp. v. 25-27). Jesus would have been considered “unclean” for even being near her, let alone touching her, yet his power had instantly coursed into her and stopped her flow of blood. She was healed. Lovingly, Jesus called her “Daughter.” He made his relationship with her clear: he was her Everlasting Father, her Prince of Peace. He said to her, “Go in peace.” While he was still speaking, the first interruption interrupted the second!

A message came to him that Jairus’ little girl was dead; it was too late to bother with this event. But Jesus was unphased and unflappable. He spoke directly to Jairus: “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” And she was!

Jesus brought back this young female also from the brink of death with similarly loving and relational words: “My child, get up!” He was the 12-year-old girl’s Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace and Healer too.

It is interesting to note in this story that Luke juxtaposes a 12-year-old girl close to death against a woman who had been bleeding for the same length of time. Jesus was both their Healer.

Henri Nouwen said, “Life’s interruptions are the places where you are being molded into the person you are called to be.” Remember,

whenever you need God's help, Jesus is never too busy to be interrupted by your need. He is not in a hurry; he is not phased by time constraints. He will stop, look right at you, and call you his daughter or his child. He is your Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace as well.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How do you respond to the interruptions in your life? Do they irritate you? Conversely, have you ever felt like you are "bothering" God with your problems? How does Jesus' response to the bleeding woman change that thought? What issue in your life could benefit from "pressing through" to Jesus in prayer?

PRAYER:

God, thank you for being my Father and for making me your daughter. Thank you for never being too busy for me. Help me with life's interruptions. Heal me from every disease, physical and emotional. Lead me not into temptation, Lord. Deliver me from evil. Amen.