

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES EMPHASIS DAY

June 2013

Package of resources for 2013

“REVIVE YOUR WORK IN ME”

A PRAYER OF HABAKKUK

A sermon by
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Prepared for the Women's Ministries Department of the
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



My dear Sisters:

It is Women's Emphasis Day once again! Our theme this year is "*Revive Your Work in Me: A Prayer of Habakkuk.*" This packet is about revival: a vital, growing experience with Jesus. As women, we need the Holy Spirit's revival: it is about what He can do in our personal lives, in our marriages, and with our children. Revival is a spiritual transformation. Revival leads us from heartfelt prayer to passionate mission.

According to Habakkuk, our hearts are prepared for revival with three actions:

- **Acknowledge that God is Holy.**
- **Acknowledge that God is the Creator.**
- **Acknowledge that God is worthy of our worship.**

As you go through this packet of material, prepared by Cecilia M. Iglesias, Inter-American Division Women's Ministries Director, be blessed with the story of Habakkuk's prayer for revival.

- ✓ Be assured by God's promise He has finished work of our salvation (John 6:28, 29).
- ✓ Be assured of God's divine wrath against sin and His end-time judgment of it (Rev. 16:17-19).
- ✓ Be assured the the Holy Spirit's work in your heart and mind will transform you into the image of Jesus (Rom. 12:1-3).

We, at General Conference Women's Ministries, invite each of you to enjoy the Sabbath morning program, but we challenge you to take the Sabbath afternoon to go into your community and share the love of God with those in need, whether in the hospital, the nursing home, the women's shelter, the children's home, or even door to door in your community. You are God's hands, God's feet, and God's touch of love to a world in need. *Your testimony can reach a heart.*

Joyfully,

Heather-Dawn Small

Director

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FEATURED DIVISIONS
CHALLENGES and PRAYER EMPHASIS

Inter-European Division
Northern Asia-Pacific Division
Middle East and North Africa Union

INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION

Denise Hochstrasser, *Director of Women's Ministries*

Territory: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Holy See, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland; comprising the Czecho-Slovakian, Franco-Belgian, North German, Romanian, South German, and Swiss Union Conferences; the Austrian, Bulgarian, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish Union of Churches Conferences.

Inter-European Division is situated in Central and South of Europe, where we face all joys and challenges of secularized countries. Education, healthcare, food and housing are taken for granted. Finances are not a major challenge.

Challenges:

1. **Secularism**—Much distraction, much freedom and still much loneliness, stress, abuse, and little need to open up to the Gospel.
2. **Illiteracy**—Some countries have this challenge; others have illiteracy of spiritual and biblical knowledge.
3. **Baptisms**—Numbers of baptisms are small, but we are happy about each person that finds a way to know Jesus and give Him a place in her/his personal heart and life.

Goals:

1. **Nurture**—We know that reaching out to women is more a question of relationship than of doctrines. Therefore Women's Ministries has put much emphasis on nurturing in the past.
2. **Empower**—Since 2010 we have been concentrating on empowering. Women are encouraged to participate in the WM leadership training program. Where women are doing so, Women's Ministries is becoming vibrant and effectively ministering. Families and entire congregations are receiving the benefit of women ministering to women.
3. **Outreach**—From 2014 onward when we will hold our first Division-wide Women's

Ministries Congress, we will be putting strong emphasis on outreach. May the Lord help us to touch the women's and their families' hearts so many, many will find their way to an active life with Christ. May these women find their worth and may they find their place inside the church, on all levels, where they can use their God-given calls and gifts.

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

Sally Lam-Phoon, *Director of Women's Ministries*

Territory: Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions), Republic of Korea, and Taiwan; comprising the Japan, and Korean Union Conferences; the Chinese Union Mission; the Mongolia Mission Field; and the Taiwan Conference.

We praise the Lord for women who are called by the Lord to work alongside the men in our Division. Whether they are at the helm of mega-churches or in a humble house church or cell group, God is surely moving them forward in ministry for Him.

Challenges:

1. **Focus for Leaders**—We do recognize that Satan works the hardest among our most effective leaders. Please pray that all our leaders (both men and women since they support one another) be renewed day by day in God's Word and in prayer in order that they may keep their focus distinct—a clear focus only on God's agenda and to stay right in the center of the Lord's will.
2. **Service of Leaders**—In a few parts of our Division, we still face the challenge of what the secular world calls “the glass ceiling.” Women are often excluded from leadership on equal standing as the men, but I'm thankful for the fact that most of our Division territory recognizes the fact that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to both men and women and uses both effectively for His cause. In God's eyes, the glass ceiling in reality does not exist. It is only a man-made concept that can be shattered to pieces when the Holy Spirit gets to work to empower women who are willing to serve whether with recognition or not; whether they are salaried or not.

Join us in prayer for these women in particular who serve day and night before the Lord faithfully in a gentle and quiet spirit that the Lord will continue to strengthen them and be their Energy and Guide. Let's all join our hearts in praying that our Lord Jesus will come quickly to

take us all Home to that perfect land where we can spend eternity praising Him for His salvation and love for us in spite of and despite ourselves!

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION (MENA)

Tibor Szilvasi, *Union Executive Secretary*

Territory: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, Yemen, and the northern half of Cyprus; comprising the East Mediterranean, Egypt-Sudan, Gulf, and Turkey-North Cyprus Fields; and the Iran, and Maghreb Sections.

Many exciting things are happening around the Middle East and North Africa Union. Sometimes we feel we are on a whirling merry-go-round going faster than we can keep up.

We praise God for the many miracles He is performing as Centers of Influence are opening up all over our territory. Please pray that permits will come through to open up work in new areas.

Challenges:

Our Workers –

- Pray that we will be a united team hastening the day when our Lord will come.
- Pray that our workers will have a personal relationship with Jesus.
- Pray that our workers will have high standards of integrity and confidentiality.
- Pray that our workers will have a deep commitment to serving the Lord and His mission on earth.

Our Influence –

- Pray for our Waldensian students who are studying in some of the world's large universities.
- Pray that our own Middle East University will be a true witness to the students who come through its doors.

- Pray for our tentmakers who are sharing Christ in the marketplaces around MENA – we need many more.
- Pray for our media outreach through books, internet, radio and TV.
- Pray for the work of ADRA in our territory.

DIVINE SERVICE OUTLINE
“REVIVE YOUR WORK IN ME”
A Prayer of Habakkuk
Women’s Emphasis Day Packet

Call to worship:

Responsive reading: Selections from Joel 2:21-32

Song of praise: “O Spread the Tidings ‘Round,” *Adventist Hymnal* No. 526 (old hymnal)

Invocation: Speaker

Scripture reading: Habakkuk 3:2, 18

Pastoral prayer:

Call for the offering:

Offertory music:

Children’s story: “Eager to Share”

Special music:

Sermon: “Revive Your Work in Me:” A Prayer of Habakkuk

Closing song: “Hover O’er Me, Holy Spirit,” *Adventist Hymnal*, No. 260

Closing prayer:

Song of hope: Congregation

RESPONSIVE READING
The Outpouring of the Spirit of God
Selections from Joel 2:21-32
With PowerPoint Slides

Leader:

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and I am the Lord your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed.

Congregation:

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions.

Leader:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

Congregation:

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke.

Leader:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

Congregation:

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in the mount of Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

SERMON
“REVIVE YOUR WORK IN ME”

A Prayer of Habakkuk

By Cecilia Moreno-Iglesias

Edited by John Fowler and Carolyn Kujawa

Bible Reading: Habakkuk 3:2

“Oh Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (KJV).

Purpose:

Without keeping the flame of the Holy Spirit alive and aflame in our hearts and in our midst, no ministry can be fulfilling, rewarding, or fruit-bearing. The ministry by women and for women demands nothing less, especially as we minister to an end-time generation. Let us come, therefore, and seek the refreshing of the Holy Spirit to sanctify us and to revive within our hearts His work of sanctification and proclamation.

Introduction

Our meditation today is based on a profound hope and an anxious prayer of the prophet Habakkuk. The Scripture reading (Habakkuk 3:1, 2) invites us to meditate not only on the critical times of the prophet but also on the times in which we live—the end time, a time for preparation, a time for mercy, a time to cling to the divine promises, a time to seek revival and reformation. It is a time to urgently seek the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a time to hear God’s voice.

Consider the life and ministry of Habakkuk. Not much is said about the prophet, but from the predictions he makes about the impending “terrible and dreadful judgment” on Judah (1:6, 7) at the hands of the Babylonians, it is clear that Habakkuk lived before the Babylonian invasion (604 BC).

The prophet was called to minister at a time when Judah, after the death of Uzziah the king who brought in so much reformation to the nation, gradually plunged once again into a betrayal of Jehovah and His holy mission and purpose for the nation. Repeatedly, Judah was called to repent by succeeding prophets, including Habakkuk.

The prophet denounced the nation for various kinds of moral turpitude and social violence (2:6-8), for accumulating riches and becoming famous by unjust means (2:9-11), for building houses and towns at the cost of innocent blood (2:11-14), for degrading neighbors instead of loving them (2:15-17), and for choosing to worship idols (2:18-19). Indeed the moral failure and the spiritual betrayal of Judah led Habakkuk to ask God two great questions.

1. First, how can wickedness and violence so mar God's people that the "law is powerless and justice never goes forth?" (1:2-5).
2. Second, even if God's people have become practitioners of perverse judgment, wickedness, and violence, how can God allow a more sinful people like the Babylonians to punish Judah and take them into captivity (1:5-17)?

The answer to the two questions comes in the form of three proclamations from the prophet.

I. The Promise

The first proclamation is a promise: Regardless of how sinful and wicked a people may be, God has a way for their salvation: "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4). That message is central to God's good news of salvation.

We are not redeemed from sin by our good works, but by the grace and righteousness of God. That message of righteousness by faith alone is central to Paul's definition of the Gospel. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

That message launched the Protestant Reformation. It gave to the world hope once more that in God's tenderness and grace all men and women have the hope of salvation. That message of righteousness by faith became the clarion call of the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the church founded 150 years ago took to the world the hope of salvation by faith in Christ alone and instilled the responsibility of the saved to live that faith through obedience to God's commandments. Hence, we fearlessly proclaim the three angels' message, beginning with the call to the world to "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev. 14:7).

II. The Message

The second proclamation of Habakkuk, as in the first angel's message, is one of judgment. The passage in Habakkuk 2:5-20 is a daring pronouncement that all nations and people come under God's judgment. Even though Babylon may have been chosen as the rod of punishment against an unfaithful Judah, Babylon will not escape God's judgment for its own sins and moral disruptions.

No one can escape divine wrath against sin. Unless and until the sinner reaches out in faith and grasps God's offer of salvation by faith, unless and until the sinner accepts God's gracious provision of righteousness by faith, there's no hope for the sinner. "The Lord is in His Holiness," affirms Habakkuk, and calls upon "all the earth [to] keep silence" (2:20). Come in silence before God. Come with bowed heads and broken hearts before the God of the universe. Only in Him there is hope.

This leads to Habakkuk's third proclamation, which is one of the most magnificent prayers in the Bible, and the center of our study today: "O Lord I have heard your speech and was afraid: O Lord revive Your Work" (3:2).

III. The Prayer

A. "I have heard your speech"

What is the speech Habakkuk heard of which he became so afraid? It is the speech of God's judgment against evil and against a generation that has forsaken God and His righteousness, and has chosen the way of evil and violence in order to seek material prosperity.

It is the speech that declares that salvation is not a human enterprise, but a result of absolute trust in God and His righteousness. It is the speech that states God cannot be turned into a molten image, "a teacher of lies" (2:18), a helpless human creation. Indeed it is a speech that proclaims God is the Sovereign who reigns from "His Holy temple" (2:20). It is a speech from the Creator of the world. It is a speech that calls all earth to repentance and silence before His incomparable holiness and glory.

Out of that closeness to the Creator, out of hearing His speech, Habakkuk says a fear has taken over us. Fear is a common emotion. We have all experienced it. But the fear the text speaks of here goes beyond a momentary scare. This fear is the fear we experience when we see our lives reflected in the mirror of the Word of God. This fear sets our moral compass upward and our spiritual direction straight so that fear of the Lord becomes the beginning of our wisdom. This fear leads us to “hate evil” and therefore to love righteousness (Prov. 8:13).

Perhaps we fear that we may not attain salvation. This is the fear that is produced in the soul as we journey the pathway toward the heavenly Canaan and at times doubt our final victory. Habakkuk may remind us of the words of the well-known hymn,

“Oh the way is long and weary, and our bleeding feet are sore;
Is it far to Canaan’s land? Is it far to Canaan’s land?
In the desert we are longing for its shelter more and more.
Is it far; is it far to Canaan’s land?”

The distance to Canaan’s land may remain unknown; but its certainty is not, and they that fear the Lord need not be afraid of either the unknown or its fulfillment time. For it is in faith that we live and serve.

As we face the final events, and the enemy attacks from all sides, that is the time for us to cling to our powerful God. He is the God of heaven and earth. He is our strength. It is then that we maintain close communion with Him. We ask ourselves, “Are we prepared to face the blows of the enemy? Do we have a faith that will carry us in the trying times that are nearing?”

B. “Revive Your work”

As an assurance that we need not be afraid of the future, and as a seal of the certainty that God will carry us through, Habakkuk pleads with God: “Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years.”

The word “revive” suggests a previous experience of glory and fulfillment that was there before, but somewhere in the flow of history got lost. Judah was responsible for this loss, but nevertheless the prophet pleads and prays that God may once again manifest His glory and purposes in the midst of His people. The expression “in the midst of the years” suggests that Habakkuk knows the difficulty of keeping the spiritual flame alive during the “everydayness” of life. It is easy to be an on-fire Christian for moments, when we are in the middle of a week of

spiritual revival or when we hear a powerful sermon. But it is more difficult to remain clinging to Jesus' hand day after day, in the monotony of our everyday lives, when perhaps resources are scarce or we face difficulties.

Therefore, Habakkuk prays that the Lord may keep the spirit of revival in the midst of each one's heart and in the midst of the community as a whole as long as time shall last, and that time shall merge with eternity when God establishes His kingdom forever. But this experience of revival is a present, continuous, joyful link with God day by day, for today "*is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Neither the accomplishments of yesterday nor the anticipation of tomorrow will do.

This is why revival is so vital in the spiritual experience of today. The word *revive* comes from the Hebrew word *chayah*, which means *to live, revive, worry about, return to, or regain*. What does Habakkuk mean by his prayer, "Revive your work in the midst of the years...?"

To begin with, revival among God's people is not the work of human effort. The most intelligent person, the most eloquent preacher, or the most sublime, noblest efforts people put forth cannot bring about revival. It is the work that happens among God's people when His Spirit stirs among them and directs their path toward God's direction. Revival is thus rooted in God—His Word, His Spirit, His redeeming mission, and His grace. Without Him and His Word, there can be no revival.

"Lord, Revive Us." The prophet almost begs God and puts Him on notice. Without God's initiative to bring about a renewal, we are absolutely helpless. Without revival, the bondage of Babylon will not be moved. Without that revival, we cannot join the joyful benediction of Habakkuk: "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength" (3:18, 19). Joy, salvation, and strength of the Christian are a result of revival.

What should God revive in us?

Habakkuk's prayer in the third chapter pleads with God that He should make His people conscious of the character and the glory of God on the one hand, and His expectations of the people on the other.

- **Acknowledge God is Holy**

The first act in the prayer of “renew Your works” is a reference to the glory and holiness of God who revealed Himself on Mount Sinai (3:3-4). How can a person or a church experience renewal without acknowledging the sovereignty, the majesty, and the holiness of God, which was so dramatically revealed on Mount Sinai where God not only revealed His glory but gave to the children of Israel a transcript of His character in the form the Ten Commandments.

Revival is a call to acknowledge the centrality of holiness in our lives, and this holiness is rooted in and governed by obedience to the law of God. Take away that law, and you are left without God. “Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 101).

- **Acknowledge God is the Creator**

Second, the prophet speaks of revival in terms of God’s creative activity. “He stood and measured the earth” (3:6). The everlasting mountains bow before Him (3:6, 7). He divided the earth with mighty rivers (3:9). “The sun and moon stood still...at the shining of [God’s] glittering spear” (3:11). All life, both animate and inanimate, both human and otherwise, seems speechless and helpless before His manifestation of His glory (3:12-16). Can such a Creator God be neglected, forgotten, and denied if we should expect revival in the church? Take away creation, and you are left without the mightiness of God. How can then a people pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:10). Revival requires an acknowledgment of the creatorship of God.

- **Acknowledge God is worthy of our worship**

Third, the prophet reminds his people that revival is rooted in an acknowledgement that “the Lord is in His holy temple, Let all the earth keep silence” (3:20). That is to say, the Lord is worthy of all worship, and we on the earth are called upon to respond to that worship. Only then God can do His work of revival in us. Worship requires that we be His saved children. Worship demands that we be His stewards. Worship expects that we be His witnesses. Worship demands that we wait faithfully and witness the coming of the King. Worship embraces acceptance of God as our Creator, vision that the Cross is our redemption, and experience in the fullness of the Spirit in everything we do.

Strength for revival

God has promised revival and reformation to the church in these last days. “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

That is God’s promise for the church. At Pentecost it was fulfilled, launching the church of God as a mighty movement that swept the world in one life time. But the promise is also for the last days—for our time. If only God’s people can humble themselves and seek His ways and work for His mission, if they can remain faithful to His creatorship and His sanctifying grace, a sweep of revival such as the Pentecost will envelop the church globally—and the work will soon be finished and Christ will return. “The Holy Spirit is the one who revives the faculties of the deadened soul” (*That I May Know Him*, July 6).

Why do we need revival today more than at any other time? The reason is simple: to hasten Christ’s coming. Do we as women have a part to play in this vital last-day drama of the ages? Look at our homes. Survey our communities. Watch where our children are going. See how much more needs to be done in our churches. More can be done by women today than ever before.

- Where is Mary Magdalene?
- Where are Mary and Martha?
- Where is our Dorcas?
- Where is our Priscilla?
- Where are the daughters of Philip?
- Where is Hannah standing guard outside the temple?
- Where is Ellen White upholding God’s Word?

We as women need to fill their shoes more and more so that a mighty revival, a return to God’s Word, will occur in our time, that our houses may become towers of spiritual strength and that our churches may be lights set upon a hill. “The love of Christ compels man to join him in their labors and sacrifices. The revelation of divine love revives in them the reality of their neglected obligation to be light bearers to the world, and it inspires them with a missionary spirit” (*That I May Know Him*, July 21).

Conclusion

A story is told of a rich ruler in India who was famous for being indifferent to material riches. He was also respected for being a very religious man. Moved by curiosity, one of his subjects wanted to investigate the secret. Why was this ruler not dazzled by the gold, the jewelry and many luxuries that surrounded him?

After the greetings etiquette demanded, the man asked, “Your Majesty, what is the secret of cultivating a spiritual life in the midst of so much wealth?”

The king answered, “I will tell you, if you will first go through my palace to understand the magnitude of my wealth. But take with you a lighted candle. If the flame goes out, I will cut off your head.”

After the two had completed the walk through the palace, the ruler asked, “What do you think of my wealth?” The subject responded, “I did not see anything. I was trying to be careful that the flame would not go out.”

“That is my secret,” said the ruler. “I am so busy trying to revive my inner soul, that I have no interest in earthly wealth.”

Let us each determine to revive our spiritual souls by having our minds and hearts fixed steadfastly on the Lord. We will then learn to know Him and love Him more each day. Then the trials and worries of this life will never separate us from His love. As a result, our love for our families and all humanity, who are all God’s children, will grow. We will live happy lives, preparing ourselves and others to enjoy eternal happiness with our Father.

We have the holy privilege of belonging to a special group of women. We are women of the end time. The many events happening around us surely give evidence of the soon return of Jesus. The time has come when we as Adventist women must each accept our assignments in the closing days of the great conflict between good and evil.

Although we rejoice that we are at the doors of that wonderful morning when all our sorrows and sadness will be transformed into eternal joy, we must first prepare ourselves for the conflict of the end time. We know that we will live in a “time of anguish as never before.” This

is the time we must cling to our heavenly Father, holding fast to the assurance of His love and mercy.

The name *Habakkuk* means, “embracing tightly,” “clinging forever,” “never letting go.” If each one of us determines to be like Habakkuk, holding on tightly to God’s hands, we will indeed see that He will revive His work in us.

CHILDREN'S STORY EAGER TO SHARE

Bible reading: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Purpose: The children will experience the blessing of sharing. They will understand that they are a very important part of the great family of God and because of this their help is necessary in the home, the church, the community, and in the preaching of the gospel.

Interaction: Have four gifts but leave only two of them visible. Choose two children to come to the front. Give a gift to each one, and tell them to give it to the person in the audience that they would like to give it to. Then ask them: How did you feel to receive the gift and then give it to someone else? Which of the two experiences made you happier? Discuss briefly. Then take out the other two gifts you were hiding and tell them that you also want to feel the joy of giving and give each of them a gift.

Developing the Topic

Vicky and Miguel were two small children living on the third floor of a building in the center of town. There was a big window in front, and one of their pastimes was to sit there and observe everything that happened in front of the theater located across the street from their house. After nine o'clock one night they saw a group of very poor children, who are called *gamines* in Colombia, arrive in front of the theater and begin to organize their beds of cardboards and newspaper under the eaves of the theater, to be sheltered from the rain.

It was a sad scene. The older ones took the best places and also took the newspapers from the little ones that they were trying to cover themselves with.

As they watched this pitiful scene, Vicky said to Miguel, “I have some things that I do not use and I think you do. Do you think mother will let us give them to those children?”

“Sure!” Miguel answered. “And maybe she has some other things they could use also.”

They began looking for sheets, blankets, newspaper, clothes and some food. Soon they were giving these things to the children. What a joy Vicky and Miguel felt to see them smiling and enjoying the little they had received!

The following day this scene was repeated. The older children had already taken over the best space, and the little ones were defenseless again. But from then on it became a habit for Vicky and Miguel to gather together whatever they could and share it with these poor children. The street boys grew more trusting and learned to ask for things they needed. Their faces became familiar, and Vicky and Miguel learned the names of some of the children as they continued to help them for some time.

Now years have passed, and Vicky and Miguel are grown up, but they never forget the moments when they shared with these boys. The joy of giving they experienced when they were little brought happiness to their hearts and is a memory they cherish.

We are sure these poor children felt the love of Jesus through two of His small children.

Conclusion

Do you know what the most wonderful thing about this story is? It is that you, my little friend, can also be a helper for Jesus. Do you think that Jesus would have been able to give blankets and food to these children without the help of Vicky and Miguel? Of course He could have, but the Lord wants us to know that He is counting on *our* help, that we are precious in His sight. He wants us to enjoy the blessing of sharing. He needs boys and girls who are willing to share, children who will be His hands to help others, children who tell others about the marvelous things God has done for us. Do you want to be a helper for Jesus?

Some of you may be wondering how you can be a helper for Jesus. My dear children, the answer is simple. You are a helper for Jesus when...

- Others get to know Jesus through you
- You find ways to help people who are in need
- What you do and say show that you are a friend of Jesus
- You are a helper to your parents and teachers
- You are willing to share, even when you do not have a lot
- You are kind and loving to your parents, sisters and brothers, and friends

SABBATH SCHOOL PROGRAM
WOMEN FULL OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture: “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:12).

Overview:

- We will use storytelling and interviews to learn about the history of important biblical women and the role of the Holy Spirit in them.
- One woman will serve as the presenter who hosts the program. The presenter’s comments introduce and transition to the various parts of the Sabbath School program.
- One woman will interview the biblical characters.
- Six women will portray the biblical women—wearing costumes of appropriate clothing and accessories of the time, if possible.

Presenter: This Sabbath School program will allow us to journey through time to meet Bible women, who at crucial moments, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, were the instruments that God used to fulfill a specific need for His people.

1. Miriam, the leader.

Presenter: Today I am happy to present a great woman, one with innate leadership. She was chosen by God and sustained by the Holy Spirit to lead the people of Israel at a crucial time.

Her name is Miriam (or *Maria* as many of us know her). She is the older sister of Aaron and Moses. From an early age, her parents trusted her with the care of her younger brother. She watched the small basket that held the baby while it floated on the Nile River, and when the baby was in danger, without fear and with a cool head, she offered to help. Then she introduced her own mother to the princess of Egypt as a nanny to raise the baby.

Miriam is an example from childhood of strength throughout her life; but it would be interesting to hear the story from her own lips.

Interviewer: Miriam, it is a privilege to have you with us today. Welcome to our church. We would like to know, what happened in your life during the time that Moses was away from his people?

- **MIRIAM:** Thank you for inviting me. I grew up with the people of Israel in Egypt. I suffered their deprivation and abuse—which was a blessing for me.

Interviewer: A blessing?!? Did I hear you correctly?

- **MIRIAM:** Yes, a blessing. During this time I closely identified with my people. I became their friend, someone who understood them, and someone they could trust. Through the Holy Spirit, God was preparing me for the great responsibility of being by Aaron’s side while we reintroduced Moses to these people who did not know him anymore.

Interviewer: Yours was a very important role in that time of discouragement for the people of Israel. I feel that must be because as they trusted you deeply. Am I right?

- **MIRIAM:** You are right. By the grace of the Holy Spirit I was endowed with leadership skills. God made me His prophet, and I soon became my brother Moses’ right hand in leading the women. After the Exodus, I led the women of Israel with enthusiasm as we sang praises to God on the sand dunes of the Red Sea.

Interviewer: What a beautiful, important, and yet overwhelming task was put in front of you. Did you sometimes feel like it was too much for you?

- **MIRIAM:** Yes; but now I understand that it was not me doing the work. The Holy Spirit worked through me. Don’t think that it was easy to learn this. I made a terrible mistake against God and against Moses, His anointed one. I had to suffer from leprosy and stay outside of camp for seven days. But even in those moments, I felt the sustaining power of God through His Spirit. I was also encouraged by the love of my people who were paralyzed during that time waiting for my return. The Spirit touched my heart; God cured my leprosy and forgave my sin.

Interviewer: Thank you, Miriam, for sharing with us such a wonderful story of God’s sustaining power. We’ll be back in a few moments with another inspiring story.

Presenter: Just like Miriam, let's raise a song of praise to the One who deserves all of our praise. Let's SING hymn _____ (choose one).

[Song: Congregation sings hymn #_____.]

2. Rahab, blind faith.

Presenter: The life of the woman we are about to meet shows us how someone who had no knowledge of Israel's God can be touched and used by the Holy Spirit to play an important role in God's plan. Rahab, a pagan woman, exhibits extraordinary faith in a God that had been unknown to her before. In the most important moment of her life, she shows greater faith than had the spies who came to her country 40 years earlier.

Interviewer: Rahab, we are pleased that you have been able to share a little of your time with us this morning. We know that you experienced a pivotal moment when your life took a new direction. You have experienced two distinct parts to your life. Please tell us about it.

- **RAHAB:** I was born and raised in a completely pagan and idolatrous community. Although I had the oldest profession in history, I wasn't proud of it like I was proud of our walled city Jericho that seemed impenetrable. Living at the wall of the city gave me a vantage point to see what went on around me. I knew about the multitude of people who crossed the Jordan River and erected camp a few miles from the city. One day I received a visit from two young foreigners who were being followed by men of my city. I don't know why I felt in my heart the desire to help them. Even though I didn't know anything about the God that they spoke of, I felt something that told me my life would be totally transformed from that moment on, so I made the decision to help them even though it meant putting my own life in danger.

Interviewer: Did you not fear the consequences that this could bring?

- **RAHAB:** True. It wasn't an easy decision to make, but the Spirit had already done His work in me, and His strength kept me firm in my decision to help them escape from Jericho. As a result, when the army of Israel came to invade the city, my life was preserved as well as all my family who were with me. I made my decision to join the people of Israel, and, wonder of wonders, I was greatly honored to be a part of the genealogy of the Messiah, the Savior of the world... as you now know from the record in Gospel of Matthew.

Interviewer: Thank you, Rahab, for sharing with us your story of a beautiful experience of faith and for having been the human instrument to welcome the young spies, and through them all of Israel, to the city and the land that had been promised to them.

In this same way, we want to say to all of our members and visitors, that our greatest desire today is that all of you feel very **WELCOME** in our church community.

[Congregation greets one another]

3. Deborah, the prophetess.

Presenter: The next women lived in a patriarchal era; but thanks to her strong character and leadership, she became the only woman to occupy the position of judge of Israel. Please welcome Deborah.

Interviewer: Deborah, it must have been extremely difficult for you to live in a time when your people, whom you loved so much, were severely oppressed by pagan people.

- **DEBORAH:** That's how it was. I was chosen by God to be judge in Israel. My house was near a beautiful palm tree. I often sat there and delighted to hear the voice of my Lord. The love I felt for my people caused them to feel like I was a mother to them, and that is what the people really needed.

At a time when Israel's leaders were fearful, the Holy Spirit revealed to me that we should go into battle, and because the leaders held back, I fearlessly took the lead. The people sought my physical presence in battle, saying, "If Deborah goes, we'll know God is with us." What a great demonstration of their confidence in me!

Interviewer: It must have been a marvelous experience!

- **DEBORAH:** That it was. God gave Israel a great victory through the hands of a woman! With a beautiful song of praise that even today reverberates in my ears, I manifested before all the people that the only One who deserves honor and glory, the only One who gives victory in battle, is the GOD of heaven!

Interviewer: Thank you, Deborah, for giving us that beautiful report. In the same manner this morning, we have an inspiring **MISSION REPORT** from those who are faithfully leading and demonstrating in the _____ (fill in the name of the union) that the victory in battle and the glory and honor belongs to the God of heaven.

[Mission Report]

4. Abigail, the prudent one.

Presenter: Abigail is the next Bible character we have invited this morning. This woman distinguished herself for her wisdom and her prudence. Moved by the Holy Spirit, she became the instrument of salvation for all her family. Now we will learn a little more about her.

Interviewer: What did your husband do to make David, the future King of Israel so angry?

- **ABIGAIL:** My husband Nabal had a mean and egotistical character that led him to unjustly treat God's anointed king. David and his men had helped us, but Nabal denied them the food they had earned and desperately needed. This rightly angered David. I realized immediately the dire consequences my husband's stupidity would bring upon us, so I asked God to help me do the right thing. The Holy Spirit moved me to present myself before David with a present of food for him and his men. Kneeling before him, I asked his pardon for the foolish mistake my husband had made. And the king understood the enormity of the sin he would commit if he spilled innocent blood of my family and our servants.

Interviewer: And what was David's reaction to your intercession?

- **ABIGAIL:** The king praised my words and the way in which I averted an injustice. You have no idea how important it was for me to sense the Holy Spirit moving within my mind, giving me the right words to speak, leading my steps, guiding my actions to be able to resolve this desperate situation! And then David let go all of his anger and praised the Lord for restraining him.

Interviewer: Thank you, Abigail, for sharing your experience and your confidence in God's power to solve extreme situations. In the same manner in which King David delighted in praising God by composing, singing and sharing psalms of praise to our Creator, this morning

we will delight in praising God’s name as we enjoy our **SPECIAL MUSIC**—beautiful praise in song.

[Special music]

5. Esther, the brave one.

Presenter: The next woman fulfilled the dream that many of us may have had as little girls when we dreamed of becoming a queen or princess in a beautiful kingdom. Esther had been an orphan since she was a little girl. She grew up with her uncle Mordecai. He taught her to trust God and depend on Him to lead in all her decisions. This gave Esther the strength to face the greatest challenge of her life. Let’s get to know this brave woman a little better.

Interviewer: Queen Esther, how was your experience as the queen living in the grandest palace of Persia and the world of your time?

- **ESTHER:** There was a huge change in my life as I came to the king’s palace as his wife. But I believe I was brought by God to the exact spot where He wanted me. When my people were facing a death decree, the Holy Spirit showed me the need to fast and pray to obtain the strength I needed to do what I must. I invited all my people to fast and pray with me, that I might find grace before the king.

Interviewer: Did you know the risk you were taking as you went before the king without being asked by the king to come into his presence?

- **ESTHER:** Yes, I knew! But throughout the whole ordeal I felt the sustaining power, the strength of the Holy Spirit within me. On my own, I would have ever even attempted to go the throne room, much less arrived there in one piece. Without depending entirely on the help and blessing of the Holy Spirit, I would have been completely lost. After three days of fasting and praying, I felt absolutely certain and made the decision to go: “If I perish, I perish.” I approached the throne room and presented myself before my husband the king. By the grace of God, when I presented my petition, the lives of my people were preserved for God’s glory.

Interviewer: Queen Esther, what a beautiful story of valor and of dependence on God’s power we see through your life and your bravery. Thank you for sharing it with us today. As you did

in your time, we would also like to promote spiritual growth in all aspects of our life. Now it is time for our **SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON STUDY**.

[Sabbath School Lesson Study]

6. Mary, mother of our Lord

Presenter: For hundreds and hundreds of years, the young Israelite women expected the fulfillment of the Promise. Each one hoped to be chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah, the Hope and expectation of all Israel. Mary, a young, humble girl who had been born in one and brought up in another of the poorest, most run-down villages in Israel, was chosen to bear the grandest responsibilities ever entrusted to a woman: she became the earthly mother of the Savior of the world. I am certain we are all anxious to hear her.

Interviewer: It is truly an honor for us to have you among us. What a great responsibility you were given...and at such a tender age! Did you feel prepared for this?

➤ **MARY:** When the Majesty of heaven descended as a baby, I was chosen to care for Him. Yes, it was a great responsibility. I was required to educate Him, to cultivate His principles, and to guide His formation of character. I was asked to raise this child who was the Savior of the world. What an incredible honor and responsibility! Not one detail should be neglected of His physical, mental or spiritual development. I learned to depend completely upon the Holy Spirit to guide me while guiding Him. I saw Him grow in stature and in grace before God and men. And I was just a little proud to see Him talking with the learned teachers at the Temple and in local synagogues with wisdom far beyond me!

Interviewer: As His mother, it must have been incredibly hard for you to see the last scenes of His life here on Earth.

➤ **MARY:** My heart bled as I watched my Son die on a cross for those who even at the moment of His death would reject Him. I just don't know what I would have done without the power of the Holy Spirit strengthening me and sustaining me in that hour of need. Today, my Son is not physically with me, but I raise a song of praise, because I know that He fulfilled the great purpose of His life on Earth. What a great and beautiful responsibility was placed upon me as His mother!

Interviewer: Thank you for visiting us and for allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and give you wisdom to bring up your special child in His way. What a beautiful legacy you have left to all mothers, that of love, devotion and complete dependence on divine guidance to accomplish the task entrusted to many of us—the blessed task of raising children. Like Deborah and Ana, you were known for your songs of worship. As these women praised our Creator and Savior, we will **SING** our praises with the beautiful hymn _____(choose one).

[Song: Congregation sings hymn # _____]

Presenter: Today we have talked about women in the Bible who, just like us, were ordinary human beings, yet they were examples of the tremendous influence women may have when they allow the Holy Spirit to lead them; and they become a blessing, not only to their families but also to their communities and far beyond. Like these Bible women, our lives may spread blessings far beyond what we could ever imagine. May God help us as we seize the power of the Holy Spirit! That is our **PRAYER** today and every day.

[Closing Prayer]