



## Women of the Bible in Worship

Ten women from both the Old and the New Testament tell their story and the reason for their worship and praise to God!

**Props:** Shawls or head scarves, suitable to older and younger women.

Although ten women are featured in the sketch it is not necessary to have ten participants as long as a change in voice is maintained. When selecting participants, attention should be paid to the age of the woman sharing her story. A different shawl could quickly transform one speaker into another.

**Items particular to their life experience (optional):** Miriam – tambourine; Hannah – small child's shirt; Anna – cane; Woman at the well – water jug; Mary – handkerchief to wipe her tears; Martha – tea towel; Mary, her sister – perfume bottle; Sinful woman – vase-like jug; Mary Magdalene – pail with towel; Lydia – length of purple cloth.

**Scripture:** New International Version

If the sketch seems too long for the allotted time the *Songs of Hannah and Mary* could be omitted although they contain the elements of worship and praise.

1. Greetings! My name is **Miriam**. Perhaps you've heard: I am the sister of that little boy left in a basket in the Nile River. The king of the land in which my family—and those before us—had been guest for many generations, decided there were too many of us and all boys should be killed. But my little brother was so beautiful! How could we save him? After our mother had put him into the basket she sent me to watch and I saw the king's daughter coming to bathe and discover the lovely baby. She fell in love with him, too, and wanted to take him home. So, I quickly ran to get his mother to nurse the baby for the princess and when he was weaned we took him to the palace and he became the son of the princess. She called him Moses. He grew up like an Egyptian but he knew he was different. He saw that our people were oppressed and made into slaves. It made him so angry he killed a guard. He quickly fled to another country. Many years later, he found out why Yahweh had sent him to the palace to live: He used Moses to take our people out of Egypt to a land promised to be full of flowing milk and honey. When the time for the journey came I was with him, to help. We miraculously escaped the king's pursuing army which drowned after Yahweh split the Red Sea just for us to pass through. I was so happy and thankful that I gathered all the women and we sang and danced and praised the Lord God! *"Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea"* (Exodus 15:20-21).

**"Where have you seen God's saving hand at work? How will you join me in praising Him for it?"**

2. I am **Hannah** and I am married to Elkanah who is also husband to Peninnah. I always felt worthless since I had no children. In my culture, not having children meant the Lord had not looked favourably on me. Elkanah loved me in spite of it and seemed to feel sorry for me because he often gave me more to eat of the sacrifice we made when we went on our annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. Peninnah, who was blessed with children, was cross over it and often provoked me to cry so I couldn't eat. One day I decided to pour out my heart to God asking Him to end my misery by giving me a son. I promised I would dedicate him to the Lord as a special gift. In my distress I wasn't really praying out loud but my lips must have moved because the priest, Eli, thought I was drunk and scolded me. After I told him my predicament he assured me that the Lord God would make my wish come true and He did! I returned years later with my little boy and left him as Eli's servant. Then I sang my song of praise and thanksgiving:

*"My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.*

*There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.*

*Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance; for the Lord is a God who knows, and by Him deeds are weighed."*

*The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.*

*Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more.*

*She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who had many sons pines away. The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.*

*The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour.*

*"For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.*

*"It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed" (1 Samuel 2: 1-11).*

**"Can you imagine why I was able to praise God even though I gave up my child?"**

3. I am **Anna**, the prophetess. I am very old now, but try to imagine me as a beautiful young bride! My father had picked a young man for me to marry and I was plenty nervous. What would he be like? Would he be kind? Might he be just a bit good-looking and not too old? I worried for nothing; my

groom was everything I dreamed off and we lived together after our wedding for eight years. Suddenly, my beloved died and I was devastated: Would I have to go back home to my father's house to marry someone else? Who would take care of me when I got old? We had no children! I prayed: "Oh, Lord, have mercy on a poor woman!" And He did! Yahweh had a special plan for me. He gave me the power to prophesy and invited me to live in His house, the Temple, all the days of my life where I would worship Him with praying and fasting! Yahweh promised I would see His Anointed, the Saviour of Israel. Finally, one day, there He was: a small baby in His mother's arms, brought to be dedicated to the Lord God! What joy I experienced! God had made His promise come true and now I could put down my tired old head and wait for Him to take me home. Seems like I lived with one foot in the old and the other in a new time! (Luke 2:36-38)

**"Do you ever wonder what God wants you to do with your hands when you can no longer use them to work?"**

4. I am known as **"The Woman at the Well."** I went to that well to get water in the heat of the day because I was embarrassed to be seen with the other town women: I have a bad reputation! Imagine my surprise when I saw a man sitting there. I knew right away he was a Jew and was even more surprised when he asked me for a drink of water. Good thing he doesn't know who I am, just that I am a Samaritan woman who shouldn't be spoken to by a Jew much less share a cup with him. He had a strange way of talking, seemed to know much about me and told me he had water that I needed because if I drank it I would never be thirsty again. How could that be? I surely wanted that water; I'd never again have to make this trek to the well. Slowly I realized that he wasn't talking about the wet stuff in the well but something more important, life-saving. Then I knew he was the Messiah who had been promised and awaited since ancient times. I was filled with awe and excitement and ran to the town to tell the citizens. This was the first time everyone seemed to see any worth in me; many believed because of what I told them. I am so grateful I met this man... (John 4:39)

**"Jesus made me feel worthwhile. Can you encourage women like me, who feel little self-worth, to raise up their voices in praise?"**

5. I am **Mary, the mother of Jesus.** I was still quite a young girl when my father decided on the man I would marry. His name was Joseph, from the same clan of David as I was. As I was dreaming of getting married someday, a strange thing happened! A man, or better said, an angel, came into my room! Wow, was I scared! I had heard of angels in brilliant white robes appearing to people — but to me? The angel calmed my fears and told me God in heaven had chosen me to be the mother of the Messiah! Oh, I must have blushed when I spurted out: how can that be? I am a virgin! The angel again assured me not to be afraid and explained what God had planned. So, how could I say, "No, please, I don't like this"? I just bowed my head and said, "Let it be unto me as you have said." I was a bit afraid of what Joseph's reaction would be. But after I visited my cousin Elizabeth for a few

months to help her in her pregnancy and heard what she said about me being blessed I burst forth in song:

*"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy be His name.*

*His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel 'remembered to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever' even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1:46-55)*

**"Join me in worship and praise because what God did for me He also did for you!" "Grace abounds!"**

6. My name is **Martha**. I live in the small town of Bethany with my brother Lazarus and my younger sister Mary. Our parents are long dead but have left us a rich estate. When I heard about the poor young preacher, wandering through the country side, and all the wonderful things he did, I wanted to invite him into our home and show him hospitality. He became a really close friend, even more, a wonderful, compassionate teacher. I was so surprised and even hurt that, when our brother Lazarus took sick and we let Jesus know, he didn't come right away to make him well. He's done so for others so why did he delay? He finally showed up after Lazarus had died and was buried. I was so sure He could have saved him. But instead He wanted to go to the grave. Too late! I told Him I believed that He was the one we've been waiting for, the Christ, the Son of God. I believed in His power to heal and that Lazarus would be resurrected on the last day! (Luke 11: 38; John 11:20-28)

**"How does my story give you hope for life eternal? Can you praise God even in sorrow?"**

7. I am **Mary, Martha's sister**, and I loved Jesus, the young preacher. He was often seen at our house with Martha fixing wonderful meals to please him. But I wanted to hear what he had to say and often sat down at his feet. He saw me crying after Lazarus had died and he was much moved. He also loved our brother dearly. When we came to the tomb and he wanted the stone removed I felt just like Martha that it would be embarrassing to go into a dead man's grave. But Jesus gave thanks to God in heaven and called Lazarus to come out of the cave. We all held our breath and truly marveled when Lazarus appeared, still all wrapped up in the burial bandages. What an amazing sight! What an incredible miracle! Praise to God!

Out of gratitude I wanted to do something wonderful to Jesus! And then it occurred to me: the next time Jesus came to dinner I got some expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. He'd never owned anything this extravagant and I wanted to show him how much I loved him! His

disciples were put out but Jesus said, "Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial." It scared me to hear this because I didn't want him to die but later I understood what he meant. He knew it was my act of worship. (John 11 & 12:3; 7-8)

**"What extravagant thing can you do for Jesus in worship and praise?"**

8. My name is not important; I am just known as a **Sinful Woman**. But I had an important, life-changing encounter with Jesus. I had heard that Jesus, the famous teacher and preacher, a miracle worker, was having dinner at Simon's house. This gave me the opportunity to get close and do something nice to him. He never seemed to look down on the likes of me! So I sneaked into the courtyard behind where Jesus was reclined at the dinner table and poured my jar of perfume over his feet and then used my long, uncovered hair to dry his feet. I could feel the angry eyes of everybody in the room and my tears fell on Jesus' feet. Again I used my hair to wipe them off. I must have been quite the sight but Jesus defended me. He knew who I was and what a reputation I had and he forgave me all my sins. "Your faith has saved you; go in peace," were his words to me (Luke 7:37-50).

**"Jesus forgave me and changed my life! Have you had such an experience? Did you praise Jesus because of it?"**

9. They called me **Mary Magdalene**, because of where I came from. Jesus had driven several demons out of me and I owed him great gratitude. I and many other women travelled with him and took care of his needs and those of his disciples. So it happened I was there when they crucified him and I felt the terrible pain of losing him. How could they do such horrendous things to someone who was so good to everyone else? After he'd been buried in a stranger's tomb, with a huge stone securing the grave, we women and his disciples went home to prepare the spices for a proper burial. We couldn't do it right away because of the Sabbath day. So, in the dark of the next morning, some of us women walked to the tomb, wondering how we'd move the stone, only to find it rolled away, with the grave empty. We were filled with grief; not only had they killed him; now they had stolen his body! I asked someone standing near what had happened and the person spoke to me in a familiar voice, "Greetings." We recognized Jesus, fell on our knees, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to the Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28: 1-10).

**"Because of the unconditional love Jesus showed me I devoted my life to Him in service! He has the same love for you! Do you serve Him by serving others, with praise and thanksgiving?"**

10. I am **Lydia**, a dealer in purple cloths in the city of Thyatira. I worship God and often go to the river where other women come to pray and worship. I knew nothing of Jesus! One day, some strangers

showed up, talked about the Son of God, Jesus, the death he'd died to put us right with God and that God has raised him from the dead! As I was listening to a man named Paul, the Lord God opened my heart and the message of salvation fell in and took root. A strong urge to be baptized, along with everyone in my household, overcame me. Afterwards, I invited this man Paul and his friends Timothy and Silas, to stay at my house and to accept my hospitality. I am so grateful for this encounter and I thank God for including me in the number of those he saved! (Acts 16:13-15)

**"I was one of the few women God chose as His own and I praise Him. Do you worship God because He chose *you* in baptism to be His own?"**

Written by Renate Bishopp, 2011  
Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League-Canada, 2012