

# Courageous and Prophetic Women of Faith, Part 1 (Old Testament)

Women have been faithful and courageous champions over the centuries for the whole history of the people of God.

We do not know about as many of them as we could, because the (largely male) history writers have ignored or minimized their accomplishments.

Naturally, another reason we don't know about all the great women of the past is that many of them were restricted from taking leadership. To some extent, this is still the case, which makes women's accomplishments all the more notable.

We are all supposed to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (see 1 Peter 5:6). By building a culture within the church of honor and relational authority, we can esteem one another across traditional dividing lines because, in Christ, there is no male or female (see Galatians 3:28). The simple fact of the matter is that in giving His gifts, God does not discriminate because of gender.

"In the last days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18, NLT).

With the Scriptures as our guide, let's take a quick look into the courageous and prophetic women in the Old Testament.

## Women Called Prophetesses in Old Testament Scripture

Let's start back at the Exodus with *Miriam*, sister of Moses and Aaron. She was known as a spokesperson for God

particularly as a leader in music and dance:

“Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them, ‘Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea’” (Exod. 15:20–21, NASB1995).

Moving on through the years, we find *Deborah*, who is mentioned in an unapologetic way as one of the judges of Israel. As a prophetess and judge, she stood before God on behalf of Israel and she was an advisor to the military leader Barak, as recorded in Judges 4. Eventually, because of Deborah’s leadership acumen, she was called a “mother in Israel” (see Judges 5:7).

*Huldah* was another early prophetess in Israel. This prophetess and keeper of the wardrobe sought the prophetic word of the Lord on behalf of the young King Josiah (see 2 Kings 22:14). There were other prophets in Israel at the time but King Josiah sought her out because of her seasoned and influential ministry as a prophetess.

Then we have the unnamed woman who was *Isaiah’s wife*. Almost nothing was recorded about her, as Isaiah mentioned her only once: “And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son” (Isa. 8:3, NKJV). Some scholars have said that she was called “the prophetess” only because she was Mrs. Isaiah. I have personally come to believe that Isaiah and his wife operated as a prophetic team!

### **Courageous Women in the Old Testament**

Some of the women mentioned in Old Testament were not called prophetesses but played important and courageous roles in prophetic events. Their example of godly obedience should encourage you to follow in their footsteps, “doing exploits” (see Daniel 11:32).

The prophetess/judge Deborah had told the army commander Barak that he should march against the forces of Sisera, their enemy—specifically saying that he (Barak) would prevail. What she did not say was how this prophetic word would be fulfilled. (The complete story is told in the fourth chapter of the book of Judges.) Barak marched and he did prevail in battle but the commander Sisera fled on foot and escaped. He happened to take refuge in the tent that belonged to a woman named *Jael* who rose to the occasion.

Jael was shrewd and brave. She welcomed the fugitive into her domain and gave him milk to drink. At her invitation, he lay down and fell into an exhausted sleep. Then:

“Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, ‘Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.’ And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple (Judg. 4:21–22).

Jael did her valiant part to serve the purposes of God, as prophesied by Deborah.

In a later time, we learn from the scriptural account that a woman named *Abigail* behaved wisely and graciously in the face of an unfortunate conflict that had deadly potential (see 1 Samuel 25).

Her wealthy, “harsh and evil” husband Nabal (who, as she said herself, was “a worthless man”) rebuffed the generous assistance of David’s men to his men. David, still on the run from King Saul, took offense in turn. Things could have escalated badly. But Abigail intervened, presenting gifts to David and his men and praising him while apologizing for her husband’s actions. Disaster was averted. Within a short time

Nabal died, whereupon David claimed Abigail as his wife.

Another such woman was so heroic that an entire book of the Bible is devoted to her: Queen *Esther*.

In brief, Esther, a Jewish woman in the harem of the Persian king Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes) in the capital city of Susa, caught wind of a nefarious plot against her fellow Jews. She had kept her own Jewish identity a secret. A nobleman named Haman found an excuse to promote a decree that every one of the Jewish people would be slaughtered across the land.

Tipped off by her guardian and cousin Mordecai, who told her, "who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14), Esther insightfully deployed a plan to thwart the genocide.

After fasting for three days, she invited the king and Haman to a series of two banquets, and at the second one she revealed what Haman planned to do. He was hanged on the gallows that Haman had erected prematurely for Mordecai and the Jewish population was spared not only within Susa, but across all one hundred and twenty-seven of King Ahasuerus' provinces.

By her prayer, fasting, courage and prophetic insight, godly Queen Esther had saved the entire Jewish race.

Before we finish the Old Testament, we would not want to miss the nameless *Proverbs 31 woman*, who was prophetic in both her insight and her lifestyle. She was an excellent woman and her worth was far above jewels. "Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:28-31).

By presenting such a sweeping composite of admirable

qualities, the term “Proverbs 31 Woman” signifies all of the best that a woman has to offer in any culture or period of history.

Let’s not forget that the highest form of being prophetic, if not just giftedness, is your lifestyle!

### **A Culture of Mutual Honor**

The Spirit invites us to be all that we can be in Christ Jesus. As men and women of faith, we are equals before Him, co-heirs of His grace and gifts.

My aim and goal is to live out the kingdom cultural value of “Mutual Honor.” What a high calling!

Jesus consistently honored women and after He rose from the dead and ascended, He left behind a growing church full of fiery women who proclaim, “He is not here. He is Risen!”

Women, I invite you to join the courageous and prophetic ranks of those who have gone before you in doing exploits for Christ Jesus!

Men, I invite you to join me in doing those same exploits while confidently cheering for and encouraging the women champions of our day!

### **Let’s Pray:**

*Father, we are thankful for all of the progress that has been made over the centuries and decades within the church to ensure that women can be welcomed to become all they can be in Christ Jesus. We call forth prophetic women to be modern-day Annas, Deborahs and Priscillas for the sake of this generation and the generations to come. Raise them up! May prophetic women everywhere flourish in a culture of honor to the end that they can influence every sphere of public and church life, helping You to expand Your glorious kingdom. For Jesus Christ’s sake and in His name, Amen and Amen! {eoa}*

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