

# Not Always Easy

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I have a Facebook account that I really never seem to use. Over the years I have flagged a few people as friends and notices come up on my phone. As a result, I usually get to see one or two messages a week that are pushed to my phone probably through some sort of an algorithm. A couple of weeks ago I saw a post that I thought was rather interesting. I think it was a post forwarded to me based on a friend that I have on Facebook. In this case, it was a quote from someone who is not on my friend list but I noticed a couple of people who are on my friend's list that made comments about the post. I presumed the author of what I want to read to you is a person by the name of Bethel Dach. Again, I don't know how this works but I think Bethel's post got sent to me by Facebook through a friend. Perhaps the name could even be fake or what is called a pseudonym but the post occurred on about August 15 of this year. The post said:

*There isn't a woman in the Bible that God used who had it easy. Ruth didn't have it easy; Esther didn't have it easy, Sarah didn't have it easy, Hannah didn't have it easy, Bathsheba didn't have it easy, Mary didn't have it easy, and the woman at the well and the woman with the issue didn't have it easy. You all better stop falling for that feel good gospel and realize that God's daughters don't have it easy.*

All eight of the women listed faced challenges and had faith in God and sought His intervention in their lives. Bethel's list, lists only a portion of the faithful women described in the Bible. Some of us may fantasize about how we would have acted if we were the ones being described. Often people will romanticize the life of those described. How it might have been easy for them to remain faithful. I think that is part of what the author of the Facebook post was getting at. When we fantasize, we often forget the hardship that they went through. My title today is:

## Not Always Easy

The goal is to consider that our lives are not expected to be easy and that God has a reason why we can expect to have trials along the way. In this first section I want to review what these women had to endure from the perspective of the fact that they did not have it easy. I will not necessarily be looking at the story flow of their lives but rather looking at interesting scriptures that support the conclusion that things for them were not always so rosy as we might imagine. Turn to Leviticus 19, Ruth suffered the anguish of losing her husband. I'm going to go down the list as they were listed out. As a widow, she chose to continue with her relationship with her mother-in-law in spite of the fact that her mother-in-law was also poor and nearly destitute as a widow, with no sons or husband to protect and provide for her. Ruth was a Moabite but chose to have faith in our God. She could have returned to her father's house, probably remarried and lived

comfortably. Rather, she accompanied her mother-in-law to Bethlehem where she had to glean for food with the poor and other foreigners.

**Leviticus 19:9** *When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.*

*10) And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

God commanded the people of Israel to provide for the poor and the foreigners. Ruth was poor. She was able to glean. Esther is a revered heroine listed in the Bible that suffered hardship. She was an orphan, raised by her uncle. She was beautiful which can potentially be the source of a problem for women and so it was for Esther. She and many other beautiful, young virgins were carried away by the king's servants to serve as female companions for the king for potentially only one night. After spending time with the king, she would likely spend the rest of her life as a concubine, sequestered under guard in a home for women. Unless she happened to become pregnant by the king, she would no longer expect to have children, a husband, or a wholesome and satisfying family life as a wife and mother. She would be a prisoner with no home to manage, goals to set, opportunities for success in her own endeavors. Imagine the competitive, back biting and mean-spirited competition among the women as they tried to vie and make themselves the one to win the king's favor and be elevated to a position of prominence. The glamorous Queen Esther experienced significant trials, even after she became queen. For example, her life was in danger if she ever approached the king without first being summoned by the king.

Sarah was also a beautiful woman. She was married to Abraham but was unable to have children. When they were faced with a famine, she had to deal with the fact that her husband was willing to give her up to another man in order to get food and save his life. If God had not intervened, she would have likely become a concubine for another man. Because she had no children, she encouraged her husband to try and have children with another woman. The other woman became pregnant and then became abusive to Sarah, stirring up great emotional trials for both women and their sons.

Then a second time her husband failed to protect her and allowed her to be taken away by another man. Again, God intervened, yet at times she must have felt very insecure. Sarah suffered through many challenges. If you turn to 1 Samuel 1, Hannah was also unable to have children. She was married to a man who had two wives, the other wife had children. Apparently because she was able to have children, she considered herself better than Hannah and felt entitled to be mean and abusive. The wife made Hannah's life full of unbearable anguish and emotional pain. In her anguish, Hannah pleaded with God for a son.

**1 Samuel 1:10** *And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.*

*11) Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." (NKJV)*

Because of her prayer, God blessed her with a son that she named Samuel. As soon as her son was weaned, she took him to the priest and gave him to serve the Lord. From then on, she only saw her son once a year. Notice 1 Samuel 2:18.

**1 Samuel 2:18** *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.*

*19) Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. (NKJV)*

Hannah's life was clearly not without trials.

Bathsheba was married to a soldier. He was a man that apparently cared more about his work, his boss, and the men who he worked with than his wife. I can only imagine the loneliness she must have felt and the sense of being trapped in such a marriage. She was not alone. When a nation is at war, there are many women suffering the same trials of loneliness from near abandonment. But in our society today, women suffer the same trials. For Bathsheba, her problem became greater with a sexual affair with the king. The affair resulted in the death of her husband and the loss of her firstborn son. She ended up being married to the king as one of his many wives and the mother of one of his many children. In reality, not much better emotional circumstance than the king's many concubines.

Consider the Samaritan woman who spoke to Jesus at the well. In the course of the conversation, she was given the privilege to understand that He was the Messiah. When she met Jesus, she was a woman living in sin. She was living with a man who was not her husband. Prior to him she had been married five times before. The Bible does not indicate that she had been widowed five times or divorced. My impression was that she was divorced. Going in and out of intimate relationship is nearly always a very painful and unpredictable way to live. My observations in life lead me to believe that she was likely a very unhappy woman.

If you turn to Mark 5, imagine being sick for twelve years with an unclean condition that would at least zap your strength and steal your energy. The woman with the issue wanted to do what she could to get better. She went to the physicians in hope that they would cure her infirmities. In her attempt to do so, she ended up spending all of her money on physicians and was still not better. In Mark 5:25.

**Mark 5:25** *Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, 26) and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.*

- 27) *When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment.*
- 28) *For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."*
- 29) *Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.*
- 30) *And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"*
- 31) *But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"*
- 32) *And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.*
- 33) *But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.*
- 34) *And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." (NKJV)*

I'm sure there were plenty of other women—faithful women—in Israel who suffered the same or similar infirmities without being healed. Even today we have faithful women and men who suffer horrible infirmities and disadvantages without relief. Life for all of us has its challenges. We all have burdens to bear.

Mary, the mother of Jesus did not have it easy. As we shall see there is a very good chance that she and her husband were very poor. I want to show you the evidence of that. Turn to Leviticus 12; this chapter is where the laws are given for the purification of a woman when she gives birth to a child.

- Leviticus 12:1** *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*
- 2) *Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean.*
- 3) *And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (NKJV)*

If her child was a boy, her days for purification was 33 days and for a girl, 66 days. At the end of the days required for purification, for either a boy or a girl, she was to bring a lamb as a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering to the priest. This is described beginning of verse 6.

- 6) *When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*
- 7) *Then he shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female.*
- 8) *And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean." (NKJV)*

Notice the accommodation for a poor woman, to substitute the lamb with a bird for the burnt offering. The bird was of far less value than the lamb. If you turn to Luke 2:22, here is the indication that Mary was poor. Notice the offerings that were made at the end of her days of purification.

**Luke 2:22** *Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.*  
(NKJV)

*Continuing in verse 24)*

*24) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (NKJV)*

Apparently, they were unable to offer a lamb for the burnt offering. The alternative that we saw in Leviticus for someone who was poor was to substitute a pigeon or turtledove for the lamb. She was the woman who received such a high blessing and honor as to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. Through her, the God being that all of creation was created through, became part of the creation. She and her husband could not afford a lamb. Turn back to Luke 1:46. This is when Mary had just arrived at the home of Elizabeth, her relative, and the two women were discussing the amazing miracles that were happening to them.

**Luke 1:46** *And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,*  
*47) And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*  
*48) For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.*  
*49) For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.*  
*50) And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.*  
(NKJV)

Mary's lowly state as she described it certainly contradicts my thoughts of what I would expect the conditions to be like for the arrival of such an important person as her son, the Messiah.

All of these women demonstrated faith in God, even through adversities. Their faith was not based on their lives being easy. Their faith was because they trusted God. Turn to Hebrews 11; the point of listing those heroines of the Bible in the Facebook post was that they lived lives full of difficulty. Following their example, we should not lose faith when we also face difficulties in our lives. Their lives were not easy, yet their faith brought about blessings. There are many more women of note listed in the Bible, beyond the eight that were listed in the Facebook post. Hebrews 11, the chapter we often call the faith chapter, brings attention to three women of faith and gives reference to many more.

**Hebrews 11:11** *By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. (NKJV)*

Sarah was listed in the Facebook post. As we have already noted, she suffered many trials yet she is one who is listed as one who maintained her faith in Almighty God.

*Continuing in verse 23) ...*

*23) By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. (NKJV)*

Moses' parents were from the tribe of Levi. His father was Amram and his mother Jochebed. In the midst of horrible oppression and hard times under a regime bent on destroying Hebrew children, his mother was able to nurse her son and see him grow up to be a prominent person in Egypt. Continue now in verse 31.

*31) By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. (NKJV)*

If you remember Rahab was the lady in Jericho. There were many other women of faith suffered hard times. This is also in verse 35 and this is the "many other" that I'm referencing.

*35) Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (NKJV)*

The women highlighted in Hebrews 11 were highlighted for their faith, not for their blessings or having an easy life. They were all faithful despite their hardships. If you turn to Deuteronomy 5, there is a belief held by many that if we believe in God, we will not have hardship. The belief is that those who are righteous are prosperous and those who are wicked suffer hardship. Truth is, God does promise blessings to come our way for keeping His laws and following in the way of righteousness. We'll look into that a little more deeply.

**Deuteronomy 5:29** *Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (NKJV)*

What I don't think is clearly understood, is that those blessings are normally the result of the wisdom we gain from following God's commandments. I'm not saying that God does not intervene with blessings. I want to emphasize that God has established that making good decisions brings about blessings. In Psalm 19 we see the wisdom we gain from obeying God allows us to avoid the natural consequences of sin.

**Psalm 19:7** *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*  
8) *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; (NKJV)*

The statutes are based on the commandments that are the fundamentals of the law. God's desire is that we rejoice in our understanding of God's hope for us. Verse 8 again.

8) *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*  
9) *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*  
10) *More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; (NKJV)*

God desires that we understand and internalize His laws and statutes and that we revere Him with great respect and worship. Riches can be taken away from us. Gold is like cash. When I think of cash, I think of a fistful of dollars. A fistful of dollars can run through your fingers as quickly as water. If you do not invest those dollars into something that will make you money, it will soon be gone. Just like holding water in your fingers. Similar to investing money, the fear of God along with keeping His commandments and judgments that have been internalized into your mind and heart will produce profit and joy, sweeter than honey. If you do not internalize righteousness into your heart and mind, you will lose it just like water running through your fingers.

10 continued) ... *Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*  
11) *Moreover, by them Your servant is warned, [the commandments are a warning] And in keeping them there is great reward. (NKJV)*

The wise person who understands and keeps God's laws and judgements can usually avoid making foolish and destructive decisions which have the consequences of creating hardship. We see in Isaiah 3 that health, prosperity, and joy are natural consequences of righteousness. Here in Isaiah, this is Yehovah speaking, Isaiah 3:10.

**Isaiah 3:10** *Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, For they shall eat the fruit of their doings. (NKJV)*

What they are doing is producing the fruit and if they are righteous, they are going to produce good fruit, it's automatic. The natural consequences of sin make our lives more difficult.

*Continuing in verse 11)*

11) *Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, For the reward of his hands shall be given him. (NKJV)*

God is not constantly intervening in our lives by controlling and nudging others aside for our benefit. Some people think and teach that if we believe and trust in God, He will control events in our lives that will make us healthy, happy, and profitable. The fact is, He has established systems that automatically produce results. The consequences of obeying the laws of God are what bring about blessings. The laws of blessings and cursings are spiritual laws of nature similar to the law of gravity. The law of gravity can be resisted and even ignored but only for a while. God has designed this life to be challenging as a part of the normal course of events. Hardship develops and refines us. If you turn to Job 1, Job was a righteous man and God said that he was blameless and upright and that there was no one else who was up to the standards that Job had achieved.

**Job 1:8** *Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"* (NKJV)

In spite of the righteous character that Job had, God still allowed him to be tested. Turn to the end of the chapter, Job 42, hardship and trials are a natural part of our existence. Bad things do happen to good people. God allowed bad things to happen to Job. They didn't happen to Job because he was a sinner or practicing wickedness. God publicly commended Job in heaven because of his righteousness. Job lost nearly everything that was dear to him over events that could conceivably happen to anyone. Many things happen to us based on nothing more than time and chance. In Job's case the terrible tragedies were intentionally brought on by Satan. The trials refined Job to have an even greater understanding of God and His ways of righteousness. After the trials, he repented of his errors of understanding.

**Job 42:5** *I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.  
6) Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes.*" (NKJV)

I actually suspect that all of us would consider ourselves abhorrent when we finally do see God. We will likely wish that we had tried harder and done better. Verse 12.

**12) Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.** (NKJV)

The natural results of what Job learned and practiced produced even greater wealth and blessings than he had before. We can expect trials in this life, as well as times of great joy and pleasure. This life was not designed to be easy. The events in our lives are for our edification and growing toward righteous character. Part of that process requires us to learn the realities of life. Life is not always easy for our benefit.