

Our Bible Sisters:

Miriam—Trusting God with Your Position in Life

Participant's Guide

This Bible study was written by Marilyn Miller, a staff minister at Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Houston, TX. The theological content was reviewed by Professor-emeritus Joel Gerlach.

Our Bible Sisters is a series of one-hour studies that may be used separately or in any combination. Each looks at a different woman of the Bible, highlighting God's faithfulness in her life, with applications to the lives of all Christian women today.

Miriam—Trusting God with Your Position in Life

Opening Prayer

Someone once said, “The hardest instrument to play is second fiddle.” This was the assignment that God gave to the woman, Miriam. Though she was the oldest child in the family, Miriam grew up in the shadows of her two younger brothers, Aaron and Moses. She would become one of the most prominent and respected women in Israel, but she would struggle with following the lead of her baby brother... She served as a faithful public servant. But it was also Miriam who became jealous of her brother’s position and publicly voiced her dissent... Her life is an example of how God deals with those who will refuse to trust authority he places in their lives.

(Barber, page 23)

The Scene

Egypt is under a new pharaoh. The Israelites, slaves of the Egyptians, are growing rapidly in number and their masters fear they will become too populous and powerful. Pharaoh orders that all Israelite boys be killed at birth. In this setting Moses is born.

1. From Exodus 2:1-10, what do we learn about Miriam’s role in keeping him safe?

2. Why were Miriam’s actions so important in the young life of Moses?

Miriam’s Family

3. What do we know about Miriam’s family?
 - Her siblings? (1 Chronicles 6:3)

 - Her parents? (Exodus 6:20)

- Her position in the family? (Exodus 7:7)
- Her husband?
- Family occupation?

Miriam's Leadership

4. Miriam grew into a role of responsibility and leadership. What did she do after God separated the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape from Pharaoh? (Exodus 15:19-21)
5. By this time she would have been about 90 years old. Here she is called a prophetess. What is a prophet or prophetess?
6. Micah 6:4 also tells us she had a special calling from God—note that God says “he sent her” to Israel. Quickly scan 1 Chronicles 6:2-30. Do you see anything significant in the inclusion of Miriam in this list?

Miriam's Attitude

As the Israelites continued their march through the desert, they quickly forgot about their dismal lives in Egypt and complained. Read Numbers 11:1-4, 11:10-20 and 11:31-33 to see the difficulty Moses had leading the Israelites.

7. What changes in leadership did God make in 11:16-17 and how might this have affected Miriam's attitude?

8. Read Numbers 12:1-2. What do we learn about Miriam's actions and her motives from these verses?
9. Compare her attitude with that of Moses given us in Numbers 12:3.

God's Response

10. Read Numbers 12:4-16. When and how does God begin dealing with the controversy?
11. What is the main point of God's message to Miriam and Aaron?
12. Why might only Miriam be struck with leprosy?
13. Was there any consequence for Aaron?

Proper Attitude

14. What if Miriam really could have done a better job than the 70 elders that Moses named? Would she then have been justified in her attitude and comments?
15. What are the proper attitudes to keep in mind when we think about the leaders God places in his church, workplace and home?

God-given Roles

16. We can use the word vocation to describe the roles God gives us in life. Martin Luther once said, “Every ox wants a saddle and every horse a plow.” What did he mean?

17. Talk about a time when you were tempted to covet another’s position or under-appreciate your vocation. How did that affect your attitude?

18. Contrastingly, talk about a time when God blessed you with contentment in your role. How did that impact your contentment?

Repentance

19. Read Numbers 12:11-12. What does this tell us about repentance?

20. What do we learn about the consequence of Miriam’s sin from Numbers 12:13-16?

21. Do you think she was repentant?

22. Read 1 John 1:8-9. When we repent of our sinful attitudes and actions, what is God’s promise to us?

Lessons from Miriam's Life

23. God shows us the gifts he gave Miriam and her faithfulness in using them. He also shows us her sins. What might we learn from Miriam's story?

Closing Prayer/Meditation

What God Ordains is Always Good CW 429 vs. 1

*What God ordains is always good;
His will is just and holy.
As he directs my life for me,
I follow meek and lowly.
My God indeed In ev'ry need
Knows well how he will shield me;
To him, then, I will yield me.*

For further thought:

In the coming days, make a list of the various vocations God has given you. Pray that God would strengthen you for faithful service and contentment in those roles. Pray for the leaders in your church, pray for the leaders in your workplace, and if you are married, pray for your husband's leadership in your home.

References:

Lockyer, Herbert. All the Women of the Bible

Barber/Rasnake/Shepherd. Life Principles from the Women of the Bible