

SAU Women's Ministries



Week of Prayer 2019



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Compiled and Prepared by the Southern Africa Union Conference of the
Seventh-Day Adventist Church Women's Ministries Department

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Order of Service

□ Song Service

Suggested hymns:

I need thee every hour SDA Hymn 483, Christ in song 24
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- **Theme Song:** SDA HYMN 611, Vernacular 20 “Awake my soul”
- **Opening Prayer**
- **Welcome Remarks (Special focus on non-SDA's)**
- **Poem by YAWM**
- **Special Item of Music**
- **Sermon**

Prayer Session:

1. Praise
2. Confession and Claiming Victory over Sin
3. Supplication Intercession
4. Thanksgiving

□ Closing Song

□ Closing Prayer

Theme Song: 611- Awake, My Soul!

1 Awake, my soul! stretch every nerve,
 And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
 And an immortal crown.

2 'Tis God's all animating voice
 That calls thee from on high;
'Tis He whose hand presents the prize
 To thine aspiring eye.

3 A cloud of witnesses around
 Hold thee in full survey;
Forget the steps already trod,
 And onward urge thy way.

4 Blest Savior, introduced by
 Thee, our race have we begun;
And, crowned with victory, at Thy feet
 We'll lay our trophies down.

Poem: Awake my soul

By: Zoe Maphala

Awake my Soul to the love of Christ
That was painfully displayed at Calvary
Awake to the love that did not look to self
But selflessly broke the chains of sins slavery

Awake my Heart
For you were once hard as stone.
But the Saviour looked upon you with Mercy.
Gave you a heart of flesh
And every warm beat Jesus love was shown

Awake my mouth
For in Jeremiah you showed your power
I was scared and meek
But you reached out your hand to touch my lips
And gave me a chance to speak

Awake my Eyes
You helped me rise up against my blindness
I was walking in the dark for too long
But your Grace favoured me
And I could clearly see your righteousness

If He should come today,
And find my hands so full of future plans, however fair,
In which my Saviour has no share, what would He say?

If He should come today,
And find my love so cold, my faith so very weak and dim,
I had not even looked for Him, what would He say?

If He should come today,
And find I had not told one soul about my Heavenly Friend
Who attends my blessings all the way till the end, what would He say?

If He should come today,
Would I be glad? Remembering He had died for all,
And none through me, had heard His call. What would He say?

Oh Lord, awaken my Soul,
Awaken our Hearts,
Awaken our Mouth
And awaken our Eyes...



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18 January 2019

My Dear Sisters in Christ

Greetings to you all my sisters.

Awake my soul and give me wisdom and purpose that I may be a useful vessel that reflects God's love. This year's Week of Prayer Reading, Christ is anxiously waiting to awaken our fainting souls for His glory and stretch our every nerve. We must remember that a heavenly race demands our zeal. Hence our theme for this year is titled "Awake My Soul".

Many thanks to the ladies from Trans-Orange Conference under the leadership of Mrs Magagula who wrote the readings for this year.

For this Week of Prayer, may we please intercede for our sisters in Cape and Lesotho Conferences. Also invite your neighbours, colleagues and friends to come and sit with you at Jesus' feet.

May this week revive your spirit.

Blessings and much more.

Zodwa Kunene
SAU Women's Ministries Director

AWAKE MY SOUL AND GIVE ME WISDOM – JEHOSHEBA

DAY 1: SUNDAY

Author: Nothando Magagula

Scripture reading: 2 Kings 11

Background and setting

The book of 2 Kings continues from 1 Kings and whose author is unknown. It is a story about the history of the Kings of Judah and Israel. It is a story of Monarch's who failed God. While the story tells of the Monarch's failure, it also tell us of God's unrelenting commitment to his people through words of hope, judgment, summons and warning as God seeks to maintain God's covenant relationship with His people. It encourages us to believe that God is patient and merciful and he stands at the door knocking and waiting for us to heed his invitation and that he listens to our prayers.

Chapters 1-2 complete the presentation of Elijah's Prophetic ministry while Chapters 3-9 describes the ministry of Elijah's successor, Elisha. Chapters 9-10 tells us about the defeat of Baal and the end of the dynasty. Athaliah making herself Queen of the Judean Throne and the Restoration of Davidic Rule under Joash are related in Chapters 11-12. This is where our scripture for consideration is found.

The rest of 2 Kings details the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria in Chapters 13-17 followed by the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon in Chapters 18-25. Despite the righteous reign of Hezekiah (Chapters 18-20) and Josiah (Chapters 22-23), this book suggests that their plight was not due to the failure of God's promise to David. Rather, their own failure regarding such matters as worship outside the central sanctuary, idolatry, and other covenant violations brought about the destruction at the hands of Assyria and Babylon.

2 Kings 11 describes a story about Athaliah who plotted and took over the Kingdom

of Judah as a Monarch and as a result of her wickedness she destroyed all the royal heirs. She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel whose name means "Yahweh is exalted", needless to say she never lived after her name. On the Contrary, she dishonored God in every way possible. Athaliah had Jezebel's force of character, she was unscrupulous and disregarded human life. Her reign was stained with bloodshed and Baal worship. The story does not end there it continues to tell us about a little known women called Jehosheba whose name means "Swear by God" who stole her nephew Joash and hid him in the temple.

2 Chronicles 22:11 tells us that Jehosheba was the wife of Jehoiada, the High Priest and as a result she was in a position to save and hide her nephew, Joash who was only one year old. This was the only instance where a princess is allowed to marry a High Priest. This woman had an important place in God's plan of salvation. Through her courage and cleverness, she preserved the royal line of David through which the Messiah would come. What great news although evil people like Athaliah will begin their work, but God can always raise up a Jehosheba. Praise the Lord!

As Morgan writes: "Thus evil always breaks down. It is extremely clever, it calculates on all the changes, and seems to leave no unguarded place; but with unvarying regularity it fails somewhere to cover up its tracks, or to ensure its victory".

The Lord promised to maintain the family of David, and not quench the light of it, therefore he moved the heart of Jehosheba to preserve him where the priest slept. The promise made to David was bound up in one life. Without Jehosheba the Messianic line would have disappeared. So God needed to keep his promise. What a mighty God we serve whose promises are yes and Amen. It was a special providence that Joram though a king, a wicked king married his daughter to Jehoiada, a High Priest. Some may think this was a scorn to the royal family, but it saved the royal family from ruin. For Jehoiada's interest in the temple gave her an opportunity of settling him on the throne. What blessings

are in store for families who marry their children to those that are wise and good.

After six years we see Jehoiada giving orders to the captains so that Joash can be crowned King in the seventh year and Athaliah is killed and all the people of the land celebrated victory and the worship of God is restored.

Application

We can learn some lessons from the life of Jehosheba:

1. She was a wise woman

We see wisdom in the way she rescued her nephew. "Wisdom is the ability to discern what is right, and do what is right, and do what is right at the right time. As in the Proverbs 31 woman, she is able to discern the needs of her family long before it impacts them and she makes adequate preparations to meet emergencies. Through the wisdom of God she successfully fulfils her responsibilities as a mother, wife, worker, and citizen". We see the way in which Jehosheba was able to discern what is right and do what is right through the guidance of God.

As the Psalmist says, "The fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom", not intelligence. Intelligence leads to arguments. Wisdom leads to settlements. Intelligence is pursuit of knowledge, it tires the seeker. Wisdom is pursuit of truth, it inspires the seeker. As a woman who revered God instead of man, she began to be wise in the midst of danger. She was courageous in her actions, to be able to hide her nephew for six years without being caught shows the wisdom and strength which God gave her.

Being a wife of a High Priest she knew the Scriptures and was not willing to be disturbed in her knowledge of so great salvation. As women today we too can successfully fulfill the purpose of God in all spheres of our lives. We too, if we fear the Lord, will be directed by God's wisdom and as a result glorify His name.

2. She was a brave and courageous woman

Her willingness to rescue her nephew was VERY DANGEROUS, if she was caught she was to be killed. But Jehosheba did not hesitate, she saw what needed to be done, and despite the personal danger, she took action. As she steals baby Joash, I can imagine her recite the verse, "The Lord is my light and salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid"? Brothers and sister the Bible encourages us in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain".

Indeed the labor that Jehosheba did for the Lord was not in vain as it saved the Messianic line, and the promise made to David was fulfilled. When we allow God to take control we too can do great things for Him, no matter how small the task is we are to be brave and courageous like Jehosheba who did not look at what is seen but that which was unseen. As a result she did not see danger. Her labor was that of preservation. Even though she grew up in an evil family she did not allow that evil to saturate her. Even if we are surrounded by evil we too can serve God just as Jehosheba did. She knew that her decision to save her nephew would go against the family but she stood firm and chose to follow God. She endured Athaliah's reign in Judah and suffered the loss of many family members, but she stood firm.

We are to be ever ready to help others by God's grace even in the midst of personal danger. All around us are opportunities to help. There are souls that are threatened by the devil worse than Athaliah. The destiny of those in peril depend upon our response. Will we be vigilant like Jehosheba or will we be asleep and not see what is happening around us? Lord Awake our souls!

3. God's providence – Jehovah Jireh, God my provider

Through the life of Jehosheba we see God's providence. God was able to allow the wicked

King Ahab to marry his daughter to the High Priest Jehoiada which was not the norm for a Princess. This marriage was able to allow Jehosheba access to the

temple to hide the soon to be King Joash. We see that even before the promise was fulfilled God had already made a plan of how to fulfill the promise.

In the midst of uncertainty and evil, what God promised he fulfilled. Sometimes we may look at our lives and wonder if God hears us, but oh YES he does. We should not be discouraged by the evil around us, we should not be discouraged by the wicked succeeding and we are stagnant. God will raise up a Jehosheba. The Lord is mighty in all his ways. He knows our future. He who has started a good work in us will complete it. God's faithfulness is always constant. God has defeated the plans of the evil doers. They plan your fall however by the power of the mighty God their plans fail.

At the time of Athaliah's reign we see that the worship of God was replaced by Baal worship. As a result, looking for Joash in the temple was the last place that Athaliah would think to look.

God's ways are not overcome by evil. King Joash was preserved in the midst of idolatry for the purpose of God. I am reminded of the children of Israel when faced with the red sea. God hardened Pharaoh's heart and allowed him and his army to pursue the children of Israel. Pharaoh did not know that God was fulfilling his plan in saving the Israelites. However much evil may prevail, God will always be victorious. Although Baal worship brought disgrace and distraction in worshipping God, finally God's plan was vindicated. Take heart my brother and sister, the battle is not yours but the Lord's. God is our provider even in the midst of uncertainty. God always wins

Conclusion

God can use us if we allow him. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. When we are weak then he is strong. May God grant us the wisdom to do His will for our lives. Though Jehosheba was overlooked by most readers, she played a vital role in preserving the Messianic line. Let's put ourselves in her shoes for a moment. Imagine how she felt acting against Athaliah for seven years.

Where do you think she got her strength? What were her temptations and fears? Let your imagination help you envision what her life might have been

like. Ask God to speak to you through her story. Then ask for the grace to be like her, to be a woman who always cherishes, protects, and nurtures life. After you have done that, take a moment to think about Jehosheba's joy when she heard that Athaliah had died. Let Jehosheba's story encourage us to do what is right regardless of the risks involved.

Appeal

Lord when faced with evil, whether it's in government, in the church, or in my neighborhood or family, help me to do whatever is in my power to resist. Give me wisdom to know what to do, courage to act well, and grace to trust you for the outcome.

Prayer Session

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

Praise

- Praise God for his power, which is far greater than the power of evil.
- Praise him for the opportunities he gives us to serve him and his power revealed in us.

Confess

- Any tendency to allow difficult circumstances to suffocate our faith.

Supplication

- Ask God for courage to act on behalf of the innocent regardless of the consequences.
- Pray to be like Jehosheba and not be afraid of those who can harm the body but not kill the soul.
- Ask God for wisdom to discern what is right
- Do what is right at the right time.
- Ask God to awake our dead souls.
- Prayer for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

Thanksgiving

- That God always does what he says he will do no matter the odds against him.
- Thank God for his providence.
- Thank God for giving us his courage.

AWAKE MY SOUL AND RENEW MY HEART

DAY 2: MONDAY

Author: Boitumelo M.E. Ntombela

Scripture reading: Psalm 51:10-14 (NIV)

"10- Create in me a clean heart Oh God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. 11- Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. 12- Restore to me the joy of your Salvation, and make me willing to obey you. 13- Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you".

In ancient Israel, there was constant war brewing. Israel was always having enemies and the Kings were at war often. A story is told of an ancient King who never went to war at a particular time and the devastating aftermath of his staying home while a war was on. King David stayed home during the time of war. One afternoon, after he had taken a nap, he gets out of bed and walks on the roof of the palace. Looking over the city he notices a beautiful woman bathing. He then decides to send someone to find out who she was. David is told that she is the daughter of Eliam and the wife to Uriah. He then sends a message to her and upon her arrival he slept with her. We are later told that she sent a message to the King that she is pregnant...

Beloved you will notice:

- That the King was supposed to be at war
- When he awakes from his afternoon nap he walks to the roof looking around the City he notices a beautiful woman
- He sends someone to enquire about her
- He knows she belongs to another but he sleeps with her anyway

David sends for Uriah who was then at war...when Uriah arrives, they make chit chat as to how the war was progressing and then tells him to go home and relax. Send him a gift after he left the Palace. Uriah doesn't go sleep at home, he sleeps at the entrance of the Palace. David heard about it and summons him and asked why he did not sleep at home. Uriah replies basically saying war is brewing and the Ark of God is out there... how could he go eat and sleep with his wife while all that was taking place?

David then invites him to dine with him and he gets him drunk, the man still doesn't go home to his wife...he sleeps at the entrance with the Kings Palace's guard. The following day David writes Joab a letter indicating that Uriah must be put in the fore front of the war. When the Ammonites attack, the army should step back so that Uriah can be dealt with a death penalty.

- David sent for Uriah to come home from the battle fields
- Urges him to go home and sleep with His wife
- Sends him back to war with a letter to give to Joab, the content of the letter being his death warrant.

Joab does as he is commanded and as we know Uriah is killed. The King is sent news of Uriah death, Bathsheba mourns the death of her husband and after that she becomes the wife of a King. She gives birth but the Lord was displeased with what David had done.

- Brethren there are people who can/ will get you to do things you have no business being involved in, and you do them for the sake of loyalty to them but not God. Be careful!

The Lord sends Nathan the prophet to David who unpacks his story graciously and lovingly... King there were two men one rich and one poor. One day the rich man had guests and instead of him slaughtering one of his own lambs from his flock he takes the poor man's lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guests.

David responded in anger at the thought and says how such a man deserves to die! Nathan then says to David you are the man. Nathan continues to tell him what the Lord had said... a sort of narration of his autobiography and then lastly judgement. David confesses to Nathan that he indeed has sinned against the Lord. David and Bathsheba's son dies because he had shown utter contempt to the Lord. Death is usually preceded by disobedience, both emotionally and physically (2 Sam 11-12).

David writes this Psalm after this unbelievable circumstances he now finds himself in. It seems he all of a sudden had not only woke up to a horror movie which he had been the director of. The writer is under excruciating pain at the revelation of what he is capable of, what he had become... no longer a man after God's own heart. Defile by sin and its misery.

Let's go to Psalm 51

The Lord wants us to learn something...He wants us to learn the art of forgiving. The greatest and yet most difficult thing to do, and required of us is to forgive. We are called to live above offense and to block the desire to be bitter by practicing forgiveness. Forgiveness, as we all know, is easier said than done. Every day the devil wakes up someone to come offend you, every day we have reason to be offended, it can be at home, at school, at work, at the supermarket, anywhere really. The devil likes to put us in a place where we think we cannot forgive, because he knows what happens to our relationship with others. Will be torn asunder, and our witness for God will be compromised...We can't preach a forgiving God yet we can't forgive our offenders. Our relationship with God is also affected.

When we don't forgive one another the Church is torn apart, Church wars arise because a sister could not forgive another. God takes forgiveness very seriously, hence he says in the Lord's Prayer if you don't learn to forgive others then I can't forgive you. Whenever you refuse to forgive someone you are not hurting them you are hurting yourself and destroying your intimate relationship with God and putting it at risk.

QUESTION: What has someone done to you that you would risk your own SALVATION?

It is true that some offenses are easier to forgive, others take time... Let me be the first to acknowledge that it is a little harder to forgive repeated offenders, to forgive people who are unapologetic or empathetic and those who wound the ones we love.

A profound thing I have found is that it may be possible to forgive others, however what about forgiving yourself. It is more difficult to forgive ourselves of the offenses we have brought to ourselves, in our lives. Most people struggle to forgive themselves.

There are two other men who understand this very well. Peter, the powerful Pentecostal preacher knew how difficult it is to forgive himself. After Christ had told him that he would deny Him three times before the cock crows, he did just that. Peter was so embarrassed and ashamed that he disassociated himself from the disciples. He couldn't stand the possible exposure, what will Christ now say, what will be his condemnation? Can you imagine him saying, "What did I do?" Where do I go from here?

Judas, after he was told by Christ himself that he would betray him, He did exactly that. Judas was a mess, he couldn't deal with his betrayal, he probably kept playing the events of the days over and over again and again. It became too much to bear and he committed suicide.

David, the anointed of God, the musician, the warrior who defeated the giant with a sling, the author, the man after Gods own heart...! When David is confronted by the Prophet he has to come face to face with his sin, he falls on the floor he could not be consoled.

The characters I have just mentioned are no different from us, from you and me... Let me tell you about your neighbour... they have made a mistake in life. Everybody has made some mistake. Everybody has fallen short somewhere. Every one of us have dropped the ball at some point in our lives and I am not talking about the things people know. We have sinful stains, we have some

secret stuff we are not confessing, and if you are Peter or David you know that those mistakes will haunt you for life. In (v3) David writes “For I recognise my rebellion; it haunts me day and night”. He says wherever I go I am confronted by my sin, something I did in the past is ever before my eyes, and it is there in the day and night.

It maybe something you have been struggling with and you told the Lord after an alter call you will never do it again...but then again and again you keep doing it. Maybe it's something that could hurt someone, maybe something that could hinder your opportunities in life. (v4) *Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...* He understands that his sin is against God more than anyone else! The brother recognises that his sin was against God, he utterly ignored God, and He sinned in the presence of the Almighty!

Sin may affect others but your sin is always against God. The devil has convinced people, or rather people find comfort in the fact that their sins are not known or they haven't physically attended to them, thinking because no one was directly affected then it must not be sin. We are reminded that if you think evil, or are unbecoming in your thoughts, you have sinned against God. Sin has and will always be against God!

That is why people struggle with forgiving themselves... How can you forgive yourself, how do you find peace in your sin? Technically you can't forgive yourself which makes the burden of sin so much more...Guilt will wear you down. Guilt is a prison without walls, it will kill you. Forgiveness is something that must take place between two people the offender and the offended. The offended must release the offender for the debt...Our debt is always to God and you will not feel a sense of freedom of your debt until God has released you from your offense, you won't feel forgiven until you know God has forgiven you. God is always the one offended. Simply put, you can't be right with yourself until you are right with God. Having said that, please understand that guilt is never the hand of God, the Lord has always made a way, should we fall.

David is struggling here, recognising his rebellion in the presence of the Almighty, it is unbearable, gut-wrenching, despicable, awful, detestable and heinous behaviour. Rightly so, he deserved to die. Peter is facing the same dilemma; he had just blatantly denied the Saviour. Who does David talk to, not only did he commit adultery, he murdered Uriah, he has involved other innocent people in his mess, hundreds of other soldiers were massacred unnecessarily (these soldiers who died didn't even know that the battle they were fighting was no longer the Lord's). One sin brought a multitude of sins. It was tough, how on earth did such godly men find themselves in such unbelievable situations? Self-forgiveness provides no hope, no healing and no help. But trusting God alone in Christ's forgiveness, in His atonement, will always bring true freedom and joy.

Note what these men did, they had two choices as we do:

1. Commit suicide, and end their temporary misery
2. Go to the rock (Jesus), the author and finisher of their faith.

Both these brothers run to the Rock in faith, Jesus had already made a way when we fall because he knew we can fall. David appeals to Gods mercy and unfailing love. He says: "Lord, I need your help here, please!!! blot out my transgressions! cleanse me of my iniquity! Wash me of my sin! Lord Oh! Lord Create in me a clean heart and renew a right (loyal) spirit within me! Lord I need You to do for me what I can't do for myself.

David like some of us are in need of a new heart... a heart without jealousy, a heart without hatred, a heart without lust, a heart that is not deceptive, a heart that is not calculative, a heart that is assuming, a heart that is unforgiving. A heart that is without anger, a heart that is not wounded, a heart that is without self-entitlement, a heart that is not having victim mentality, a heart that is without assuming the worst of others, a heart without pretence, a heart without self-righteousness, a heart that does not rejoice at the hurt or the fall of others, a clean heart is what we plead for. On our own we are as filthy rags in thought and spirit.

My mother would say one mistake can cause you a life-time of misery! Let me tell you today beloved, it does not have to be so, Jesus paid it all. A song writer writes these words:

Thorns on his head, spear in his side

Yet it was a heartache that that made Him cry

He gave his life so you would understand

Is there any way you could say no to this man?

How could you look into his tear stain eyes?

Knowing it's you he is thinking of

Could you tell him you are not ready to give him your life?

Could you say you don't need his love?

I don't know what you are struggling with and you may have been saying LORD, I will stop this or I will do what you ask of me. It could be past or present heart issues. It was never God's plan for us to suffer, moreover endlessly. Paul writes in Romans 8:1(NIV), "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Until you acknowledge and seek and receive the forgiveness that God has offered you...you will never feel forgiven, or have, or be at peace with yourself. The very first place you sense your forgiveness for yourself is when you receive, accept and acknowledge the forgiveness the Lord has offered you. Confess your sins and walk in the newness of a brand new heart. In the awareness of the presence of the Almighty God.

Allow GOD to restore your heart, to revive it and may you rejoice in His Salvation. Awake oh my soul and renew my heart.

63. What Can Wash Away My Sin?

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me pure within?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

CHORUS

Oh, precious is the flow,
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing this I see;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my pardon this my plea;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Glory! Glory! Thus I sing;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
All my praise for this I bring;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

PRAYER SESSION

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

1. PRAYER OF PRAISE:

- Begin your prayer praising God for who He is (His character).
- Praise Him that He never changes (merciful and faithful).
- Praise Him that He is our Saviour and He never deserted us.

2. PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

- Ask God to forgive you for the sins you committed publicly and privately
- Ask God to forgive you for the times you tried to forgive yourself
- Thank God that He forgives you according to Col 2:13-14

3. PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION AND INTERCESSION

- Pray for the spirit of persistent prayer
- Pray that God will take charge of our minds and that our thoughts should be subjected to His will
- Pray that the women after being forgiven, will do good for other souls
- Pray for the women in your Church to find grace to go and sin no more
- Prayer for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

4. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

- Thank God for His word
- Thank God that He is willing and constantly pursuing us
- Thank God for His Spirit of love and for a sound mind

AWAKE MY SOUL AND GIVE ME A PURPOSE

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD DAY 3: TUESDAY

Author: Baatseba Motea-Kim

Scripture Reading: Galatians 3:26&28

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

I greet you all in the most wonderful name of our Lord, Saviour and Emancipator Jesus Christ. I believe that we have now settled into this powerful Week of Prayer and I also believe that our souls are gradually awakening.

Our topic for today is entitled: "Awake my soul and give me a purpose" and our discourse is based on the narrative of the daughters of Zelophehad.

Zelophehad was of a descent of Manasseh who was the son of Joseph the son of Jacob. Zelophehad did not have an heir or a son that would further his name or be part of those who would receive a portion as the land was divided to the children of Israel, but he had five daughters. According to history it was known that no girl child would become an heir it was unheard of and this is where the daughters of Zelophehad come in, they had to find a way of rising above the laws of Israel and find a way that would not favour them alone, but also give right to every woman in Israel to own land.

These women were brave, they were scholars of the Torah and were wise and the Bible gives us their names, many women were not privileged to be called by their names, but these.

Their names were mentioned for a reason, they were not also named by the place they came from like, the Shunamite woman, the widow of Nain, the widow of Zarephath or named through their condition like the woman with the issue of blood.

The daughters of Zelophehad are introduced to us as daughters of a man who was not a rebel, he was not part of the company of Korah and he also died of his sins but left no heir.

The sisters came together to discuss how they would pass the door of the tent where judgements were passed. To do such you needed to know your story well, there you will be interrogated and grilled because judgements were passed by the cream of the crop, men who were schooled.

The names of these daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirza. Mahlah's name means pardon and it is further explained that her name means a deep desire for love and companionship. Noah's name means motion, Hoglah's name means dancing, Milcah's name means Queen and a deep inner desire to use ones abilities in leadership, and lastly Tirzah whose name means my delight.

With such strong qualities attached to their names the sisters approached Moses and the leaders. The daughters of Zelophehad were highly informed and using their leadership qualities they knew victory was a possibility.

Seeing that their father left no heir, they persuaded the leaders and Moses by telling them that their father's name should not be done away with, whilst they were there as his offspring. What difference would it make if land is given to them?

They were movers and shakers of those times, they were fighting for women's rights, they moved Moses with their portray of power, knowledge and fearless attitude, these sisters also moved God who told Moses they were right.

God had said they are 'right' just that word changed the law that was immutable, unchangeable and it benefited not only the daughters of Zelophehad but also the following generations. God commanded Moses to have it written down to let everyone in that situation know that there are laws that are protecting them.

It is not always that you would find a group of women sharing the same purpose, the daughters of Zelophehad had a mission and they took a risk. Driven by purpose they fought for one course together, different in behaviour and character they had to put that aside and focus on what would emancipate women . Their souls had to awake to a purpose that God willed them for, their purpose was to emancipate women in Israel, they were to let others know that it is not only men that have the right to own, but if it does happen that there is no male child then women also can be given the same privilege.

God the Emancipator agrees to that in order to prepare us for a better city called heaven where we are all His children by faith in Christ Jesus, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ.

Application

The daughters of Zelophehad are a great example of women in our country who fought for rights of women. We have just celebrated a women's month in August

which was put aside for women who were like the daughters of Zelophehad, fighters for rights of women.

There are many ministries which are in need of Zelophehad daughters to be advocates for those who cannot speak for themselves, but one thing we have to know about the daughters of Zelophehad is that they were well read. Knowing the history of Korah and his partners means they had read about them, and they had made a thorough research about the life that their father led.

We need to know a lot about a ministry we choose, read a lot about how the Bible speaks about the ministry and pray more in order that those we engage with to be part of the ministry, should be of the same mind as the daughters of Zelophehad. We also believe that: Whatever we permit on earth will be permitted in heaven (Matthew 18:18). Together we stand but divided we fall.

God has our best interest, when we are unfairly treated, He wants us to step out of pitying ourselves and He wants us to speak for our rights in order that He can endorse that which is right. His plans are to prosper us, as it is stated in Jeremiah 29:11, I know what I am doing. I have it planned out - plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. (Msg)

God softens the hearts of those whose intent is to harm us, he paves our paths so that we face our giants knowing that: "We are of God, little children and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in us, than he that is the world."

1John 4:4

Names have some impact on us, the daughters of Zelophehad had names that influenced their behaviour and their conduct, and this applies to us as well. We know how our names affect us, isn't that what Solomon said: "A good name is more desirable than great riches, to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:6). In giving names to our children let us remember to give them names that will positively influence them.

Appeal

When we get entangled by life's issues we know that God is our emancipator.

Sometimes we look at our situations and we think that they

are insurmountable and we fail to engage Jesus, yet He is the one that said, "Cast your burdens on Him, for He cares for you." You don't need to wallow in the mud of anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem. Jesus is there, turn your eyes upon Him look full in His wonderful face and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Is there anyone here today who would want to say my life is entangled by the issues of life, but today I want to rise above them. Jesus is ready to pronounce that I am right like He did with the daughters of Zelophehad and indeed I will rise above my circumstances.

If you believe that God can solve your problems stand with me as we present ourselves, helpless to Him believing that He will turn our sorrow into joy, for He is worthy much worthy, our Deliverer and Redeemer.

Jesus is the answer for the world today, above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way.

Prayer Session

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

Prayer of Adoration.

- Lord we give you praise for giving us another chance to be in the land of the living.
- We glorify your name for in your name we conquer every principality, powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places.
- We give honour to you because you are Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent.

Prayer of Confession.

- We have wronged you Lord in our speech, action and thought please forgive us.
- We lie prostrate at the foot of the cross for Jesus blood to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- We wrong you by trusting our own understanding and forget to lean on you, please find it in your heart to forgive us Lord.

Prayer of thanksgiving.

- We thank you Lord, we glorify You and we honour You for the love you have bestowed upon mankind.
- Thank you for being involved in our lives as we deal with the issues of life and
we thank You for providing solutions.
- Thank you for keeping us in good faith and making us to know you better.

Prayer of supplication

- We pray for women in other places who are oppressed by men.
- We pray for women who are forced into marriage at an early age.
- We pray that femicide comes to an end.
- Supply us with the mind of Jesus, let us know how to best use our talents for the betterment of others.
- We pray for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

Closing Prayer

AWAKEN MY SOUL TO BE A USEFUL VESSEL LIKE SHIPRAH AND PUAH

DAY 4: WEDNESDAY

Author: Phelisa Dyira

Scripture Reading: Exodus 1

INTRODUCTION

When you study the Old Testament you will find that there many strong women who are featured in the book of Genesis. The stories of many of these women, such as Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel are given to us in much detail. Through the Genesis text we gain rich insight into their lives. We are able to share in their hopes, and dreams, their joys and disappointments. There is enough information and evidence about their lives in the Bible that we can apply in our lives.

We are now going to look into 2 Hebrew women in the book of Exodus their names are Shiprah meaning beautiful and Puah the meaning of her name is unkown.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the last chapters of Genesis, we find Joseph has overcome earlier trials and setbacks in his life and due to his faith in God, he has to become second in command over all of Egypt. We learn that only in the throne "I (Pharoah) will be greater than you" [Gen. 41:40].

Joseph was well thought of in Egypt. After all, he saved the nation from dying due to the great famine. After the emotional events surrounding the relocation of Joseph's family to Egypt, we learn that Joseph stayed in Egypt, "he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt" [Gen. 50:22,26].

The book of Exodus opens by reminding us of Joseph and his family (the twelve tribes of Israel) residing and multiplying in Egypt: the sons of Israel were fruitful and multiplying greatly and they became exceedingly mighty, such that the land was filled with them [Ex.1:7]. This brief reminder along with verse 8 are key

to understanding the events that are to come in the life of God's people. In verse 8 we learn of a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

The Hebrew population in Egypt was exploding. There were so many more Hebrews than Egyptians, and this worried the new King. Egypt had enemies who bordered them. It is one thing to defend your country from an outside attack, it's quite another to be attacked from the inside as well. The new King obviously saw the Hebrews as a threat to their country hence he was worried with the rapid growth of the Hebrews. In verse 11 we learn of his first attempt preventing such an alliance: "So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labour."

The new King saw that hard labour is not doing anything to the Hebrews, he came with a more devious plan to destroy the Hebrews. In verse 12 the King employs two women, Puah and Shiprah.

The King and the 2 midwives verse 15

Puah and Shiprah were midwives, it would be wrong to assume that Puah and Shiprah were the only two midwives in Egypt. Their duty was to assist women in giving birth. In Egypt, the expectant mother sat on a "birthing stool." Ezekiel 16:4 describes some of the midwives duties: cutting the umbilical cord, washing the infant in water, rubbing it with salt, and wrapping it in swaddling cloths. These Hebrew wives clearly served the Egyptian as well as the large Hebrew population.

The King's new population control plan verse 16

Working the Hebrew men slaves to the point of exhaustion had no effect on controlling the Hebrew population, rather it had the opposite effect. The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied. This new hideous plan attacked the problem from another angle. Rather than trying to prevent conception, the new King's plan was one of unnatural selection. He would select which newborns lived and which died. In this case all the boys were to die! Why? It is quite obvious that the girls can be easily used as slaves, as for the boy children they will grow up and become warriors.

I trust we have by now gained a deeper understanding of the situation concerning our characters and the society which they lived. We are provided with little information regarding the specific actions of Puah and Shiprah, however, if we consider deeply the text we do have, I think we can now develop a few key points that are applicable to us today.

1. FEAR THE LORD NO MATTER WHAT

It's hard for us to fully grasp the gravity of this situation. Puah and Shiprah were slaves who were called to stand before the most powerful man in the ancient world. His authority extended beyond reasonable measures, the waves of his hand could mean continued life or instant death! Puah and Shiprah were told by Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew boy babies at birth. Refusing to comply meant their lives. I doubt Pharaoh deeply searched the kind of women these women were. There is no way that you can ask a woman of God such.

Most of us are not faced with life or death situations today; however, I think it is safe to say that all, at one point in their life, stands at a crossroad with a decision to make. Will I take the left or right? Will I follow the road my friends and family expect me to take? Or will I follow the road God says I should follow even though it seems narrow and difficult? Will I follow the road that makes me to stand out in a crowd, the one that goes against society, friends and family? Will I take the one that complies with God's will? Only you can answer these questions.

Remember Apostle Paul's admonition to the church at Rome? "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" [Rom. 12:2].

What was Paul saying here? Choose the right road. If you take the road your family, society and friends expect you to take, it means you are conforming to the standard of this world, you will be just like everyone else in the world. You're fitting in. You are allowing the world to form you. The world is in charge of your life, not God.

Who was in charge of Puah and Shiprah's life? Was it Pharaoh (who represents the world) or God?

We are not to be conformed but to be transformed. When we choose the right road (God's way) we begin a transformation process.

By definition transform means to change the condition, nature or function of, to convert, to change the personality or character of. The broadest scope of this term implies change.

When we choose the right road what is being transformed? Our mind, by renewal. We act and think differently. We make wiser, christian like choices. We choose God's way, rather than Pharaoh's.

When we fear God and do not do as the king of Egypt had commanded us, we choose life.

Puah and Shiprah made a much harder decision than any of us will, hopefully, ever have to make. In the face of death they chose God's way.

Paul told the young Timothy to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" [1 Tim. 4: 7-8]. Godly discipline is our second key point learned from the Puah and Shiprah.

2. DEVELOPING GODLY DISCIPLE

Puah and Shiprah were accountable not only for themselves but for all the Hebrew midwives. Their handling of this terrible request was crucial.

When Pharaoh realised that the Hebrew babies were being allowed to live, he again called our two midwives in for an explanation [verse 18].

We can only speculate as to the truthfulness of their answer [verse 19], yet I tend to believe that it perhaps was not simply a bold faced lie.

Puah and Shiprah had probably told the other midwives what Pharaoh had ordered. The women must have decided to procrastinate until after the births and thus not be able to kill the children at birth.

So what's the point, you ask? The solution offered by Puah and Shiprah was so wise and their courage to execute such a plan, which if it faltered could mean certain death, exhibited a Godly disciple that was not developed overnight.

How does one develop such a strong faith in God? It is developed with consistent prayer, study of the Word and worship. It's hard to image that they were able to develop such an action and carry it out on their own.

Perhaps this solution was an answer to a constant prayer on their behalf.

The faith it took to carry out such a scheme was not shallow. I believe it was

developed from years of prayer, and study of the Word and worship. I believe they not only leaned on God, they leaned on each other. Do we still have women who lean on each other? Do we have women who pray consistently?

Do we have women who rely on what God says in His Word?

Are we faced today with situations in our life that at times seem impossible?

There are many things thrown at us by Satan that we alone cannot overcome. However, through prayer, Bible study, worship and the help of our brethren, we can overcome.

3. GOD DOES REWARD OUR OBEDIENCE TO HIM VERSE 20-21

The text is not specific, but it appears that Pharaoh believed Puah and Shiprah's explanation and did not send them to their death for disobeying him.

God protected the women for saving His people. God was good to the midwives. He established households for them. Again the text is not specific in terms of Puah and Shiprah, but the midwives in general were blessed for their obedience. God established homes for them.

Likewise, the people (Hebrew people) were blessed and multiplied.

Have you ever wondered why things do not go the way you want? Do you often think you are coming up on the short end of stick when it comes to blessings?

What about your congregation? Do you often wonder why it is not growing and why people are not as close as they should be?

Perhaps we are falling short in the area of obedience.

If we choose the right road and develop Godly discipline with prayer, study and worship, if we are obedient to God, I believe God will bless His people. Can you imagine what could have happened had these women listened to Pharaoh instead of doing God's will?

Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women. Just like we are not of the world. Fear God first, for when you fear God you don't compromise. Be a faithful disciple of God at all times.

APPEAL

No matter how pressed you are, never stop being obedient to God.

The devil come and test your faith but don't ever give in to his tricks.

God is calling us to be women who are thirsty for Him.

Let us be like Puah and Shiprah and follow God's way.

PRAYER SESSION

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

Participants should divide into groups of four and let each pray for the following:

Prayer of praise

- Praise God and worship Him for who He is.
- Praise Him for being true to His Word.
- Praise Him for giving us life and for dying on the cross.

Prayer of confession

- Father, forgive us for we have sinned,
- Father cleanse us with your holy blood
- Forgive us for being disobedient

Prayer of supplication and intercession

- Father help us become faithful servants.
- Heavenly Father remove the spirit of disobedience in our lives.
- Lord Jesus teach us to do your will at all times.
- Prayer for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

Prayer for thanksgiving

- Thank you Father for saving my soul.
- Thank you for being faithful to your Word.
- Thank you for making us heirs of the Kingdom.

AWAKE MY SOUL FOR SERVICE, LORD

Day 5: THURSDAY

Author: Bogolo Ntombela

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:2-3, 24-26

The bible doesn't have a lot of passages that speak about women and it is not often that the Bible makes mention of a woman's name. So when it does, you can't help but pay attention to that woman. The bible was written at a time where women were not highly esteemed and therefore not necessary to make mention of them, so the few times that we read about women and their names are mentioned, you know that she was a mover and shaker of her time. She could have easily been recorded as the wife of Aquila or the woman who was a tent maker BUT she is called by her name because she had made a name for herself by the way she carried herself... Priscilla was her name and she was also known as Prisca, which means Ancient

Let us take our bibles and open to Acts 18:2-3

"And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome) and he came to them. So because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for by occupation they were tent makers."

We are introduced to this powerful couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who were BOTH tent makers by profession. She was a hands on woman who could put food on the table. We are not told that she waited for her husband to provide for her but she was industrious. This means that if Aquila passed away first, she would be able to take care of herself. How important it is that as women we are able to take care of ourselves as we live in a world that is so unpredictable and unstable. In the book of Proverbs 27:17 the Bible says iron sharpens iron. Priscilla was an iron that rose above the storm that oppressed women and made it difficult for them to play a role in the economy, yet she was, side by side with her husband making tents to put food on the table.

I would like to imagine that she was already a tent maker long before getting married and if she wasn't, she was eager to learn instead of sitting around all day waiting for the husband to make things happen. It is so sad that as women we surrender our dreams once we get married and start becoming blunt as the years roll by. While it is good to support your husband's dreams and aspirations, it is even better that you take turns to hold the ladder while the other one climbs

the ladder because iron sharpens iron. Marriage shouldn't be the end of your purpose but the beginning of a journey with your partner as you pursue both your dreams because two heads are better than one. So even in your singleness, do not surrender your purpose waiting for a marriage that might not even come. Woman! You are called to serve through a purpose driven life.

While it **is**

commendable for people to dedicate their entire lives to missionary work, it is interesting to note that Priscilla and her husband were tent makers by occupation. Not all of us are called to full time ministry, however, that does not exonerate us from the charge to 'go ye therefore'. We can use our careers to be of service to the work of the Lord through financial contributions that aid those who are full time in the ministry as well as by volunteering your skills to aid the church in becoming better institutions and serving the children of God better. It can never be right that the books of the church are in disarray yet we have charted accountants or the roof is leaking when we have carpenters and builders in our midst.

Priscilla and her husband are also mentioned in Romans 16:3-5 which reads: "3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia."

We are told that they were running a church from their home. What a powerful couple that serves with their time as well as resources to ensure that the gospel of Christ reaches the entire world. It would not have been possible if Priscilla didn't not have a heart that was willing to serve. We should not wait to be called to serve but avail ourselves to serve Gods people in and out of the house of the Lord like Priscilla. Personal ministries should be on the rise as we all know that we NEED more Adventist schools, Wellness centres and other businesses. Our churches need to stop functioning once a week and our farms functioning once a year but we should ensure that they become centres of influence for our communities and that will need you and I to come together and serve our communities. More of us need to take up the challenge of being the change that we want to see. The government's Department of Education and Health Department are facing a crisis of under resourced schools that are not able to house all the children and over populated hospitals that are short staffed, yet we are here, well-resourced with skilled members that can change the status quo of the country while ministering to the community. We cannot find ourselves talking about what the church should do as if we are not a part of the church. The church is what is it because of you and I. It is now time to refocus the passions we

have to complain into making a positive change through the church and with the church. We are all called to serve. We have been created and called for such a time as this.

Paul also mentions that Priscilla and her husband risked their lives to save him. John 15:13 says “greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friend.” Another trait that about Priscilla is that she loved genuinely. She was not just a preacher of the Word but also a doer. We live in a world that tells us that we should love ourselves. As Christian women who are mandated to serve we need to realise that as good as it is to love yourself, your love for you should not be at the expense of the next person. Our love for ourselves should actually be of benefit to those around us because Christ says in Matthew 22:37-39 “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love neighbour as yourself.” The first four commandments are dedicated to the Lord, summarised in loving God with all that we are and the remaining 6 commandments speak of our relationship with others. Loving ourselves too much to bear the burden of lying or stealing or committing adultery etc. or the burden of hurting the next person with our actions. So our love for ourselves should be of benefit to others so much so that like Priscilla we would be willing to lay down our very lives for the benefit of our friends.

Even in her busy schedule Priscilla made time to be hospitable. She and her husband not only opened their business to Paul who was also in the business of tent making but they opened their home as well. Are our homes opened to other people? Are we ever ready to house Gods children in the homes that God has blessed us with? As a teenager we used to have sleepovers and I loved visiting one particular home because they had a mother and a father who were both Adventist. Back then I really didn’t believe in the institution of marriage but because of this family, my hope in marriage was restored. I thought to myself that if marriage could look like that, then it’s worth reconsidering my stance on the matter. They poured into me by simply living their lives in a way that pleased the Lord. They were not just a talk shop at church but were doers of the Word at home where they could relax and really be themselves. Are we walking with the Lord genuinely that even guests who enter our homes will not be shocked by the things we do behind closed doors? Our doors really need to be opened so that we may be fuelling stations to those in need especially those who minister because they are constantly pouring into other people and from time to time we need to be like Aaron and hold up their tired hands in prayer,

kindness and hospitality. May our homes be fuelling stations that pour into those that are running empty.

Let's turn to Acts 18:24-26 “²⁴And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.²⁵This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.²⁶And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”

While it is good that we become fuelling stations for others, we run the risk of also running out of fuel if we do not fill up the garages. In this part of scripture we meet a man that is said to be eloquent and mighty in scripture and was fervent in spirit and spoke boldly however Priscilla and her husband could pick up some errors in what the man was saying. His eloquence could not elude them. In other words, they were so well rooted as a couple, meaning that even Priscilla knew what she believed in in her own right that they could pull Apollos to the side and explain to him more accurately the way of the Lord. She didn't follow blindly or listen passively in church. She was a student of the Word of the Lord, she knew what she believed in and could prove it and explain it to the next person thus she was a powerhouse of a fuelling station because she could be refuelled by God.

We need to understand what we believe in as Adventist Women. Why we believe what we believe and prove our stand from scripture. We must question our belief and prayerfully seek answers from the Lord through His word because we need to work out our OWN salvation with fear and trembling. We must be able to call someone out when they speak heresy with eloquence lest we find ourselves deceived due to our lack of study of the Word of the Lord. It can't be that even in 2018 men are the only ones vocal when the Sabbath school lesson is being discussed yet during lunch we are the loudest in the kitchen. We need the Priscillas who will stand for the Word of God in the presence or absence of a husband. We need to be fuelled by the word of God so that we may be able to serve in His vineyard and be directed by Him for His Glory and Praise.

Conclusion and Application

1. Live a life worth living so that your name may work for the salvation of others long after you have passed. Brighten your corner where you are.
2. Remember that iron sharpens iron so be sharp **and** ready to sharpen those around you. Do not allow yourself to be a burden to the next person.
3. Your love for you should spill over to the next person. Love yourself so that you can love others.
4. Do not limit your skills to the workplace but bring them to church to serve the Lord as well.
5. Be hospitable, you never know how you can elevate someone's life for the Better.
6. Search the scriptures and study them that you may know and diligently follow the ways of the Lord while equipping others.

You were created for such a time as this to be the best that you can be in serving the Lord.

Prayer session

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

Praise

- Praise God for giving each one of us skills and talents
- Praise God for the love that he has bestowed upon us
- Praise God for the security we find in him
- Praise God for the daily mercies He shows to us

Confession

- Ask forgiveness about times we did not share our blessings with others
- Confess that we need God's strength to witness effectively
- Ask forgiveness for times when we are greedy

Supplication

- Ask God to remove our self-centeredness
- Ask God to assist us in using our time, talents, and resources for His glory
- Pray for Godly character
- Ask God to teach us embrace opening our homes for His mission
- Pray for genuine love and for God to fuel us with His word in order to fuel others
- Ask God to show you who to assist with the blessings he has bestowed upon your life
- Prayer for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

AWAKE MY SOUL TO BE A USEFUL VESSEL

DAY 6: SABBATH

Author: Dr Verna Nyaradzo Chidziva

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 17:12

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread-only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son that we may eat it-and die."

Our sermon is based on the book of 1Kings 17:7-16. Tonight our story begins when God called Elijah to condemn idolatry being followed by Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah then declared that there would be "neither dew nor rain". In fact he pronounced that there would be a drought until he said it was over. The prophet then disappeared and no one knew where he was.

We see Elijah now by the Brook of Cherith where he was miraculously fed by the ravens. When the brook dried up, God instructs Elijah to go some 50 miles North west which was the centre of Baal Worship to the village of Zarephath located 8 miles South of Sidon.

When Elijah reached Zarephath he met a widow gathering a few sticks for firewood to prepare her last meal for herself and her son (1 Kings 17:9). It is important to note that God already informed her that Elijah was coming and she was to supply him with food. When the prophet arrived he asked the widow to prepare for him a piece of bread. The woman replied that she had no bread but a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. This woman did as she was commanded by Elijah and so there was food every day for Elijah and the woman and her family (1 Kings 17:15)

Application

God always provides for His people, and He reaches out to us with something that we need. Elijah survived the drought. Everyday morning and evening the ravens brought bread and meat to him. My dear brothers and sisters is it not amazing to think about God's provision in a situation that seems so hopeless?

God provided two meals for Elijah every day. I imagine how people were starving during this severe drought. Probably some people were having one meal per day and others were sleeping on empty stomachs.

Through the mouths of the ravens God provided food for Elijah. My dear sisters in Christ the Lord provides. He is Jehovah Jireh, "The Lord will provide". In Philippians 4:19 Paul says, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus". We serve a living God who knows our needs because he sees. Our God is able to meet our needs in just the right time as he did for Elijah. Never get discouraged my dear brothers and sisters. God sees you and he knows your needs.

Sometime later the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land (1 Kings 17:7). Yes there are those times and moments in our lives when our brooks dry. At one moment or the other as Christians our brooks run dry. What is a dry brook experience? It is that difficult time when life becomes difficult. When things go wrong and this is when we are in the valley of life and life seems to be meaningless. Everybody has once encountered a dry brook experience where something dried up. It could be your marriage, your job, your dream, your relationship, your business, friendship or your bank account. Dry brook experiences are inescapable.

Remember that Hannah, Sarah, Abraham Daniel, Moses, Hosea, Job and Hosea had such difficult and tough moments when their brooks ran dry. What do you do when your brook runs dry? Do not miss God. Lean not on your understanding. Trust God, listen to his voice and follow him where he leads you like what he did to Elijah. We must learn to listen to the voice of God when he speaks to us when our brooks run dry.

We must always remember that God is in control even in hopeless situations. Widows were never considered as influential, successful or strong women. However, the Bible teaches us many lessons of life about such "insignificant" women who showed simple acts of faith. God used widows in the Bible to accomplish greater things and He gave honour to such women despite their social status. Ellen White in her book Prophets and Kings page 129 comments

that, "This woman was not an Israelite. She had never had the privileges and blessings that the chosen people of God had enjoyed, but she was a believer in the true God and had walked in all the light that was shining in her pathway. And now, when there was no safety for Elijah in the land of Israel, God sent him to this woman to find asylum in her home". No matter who you are if you are willing God can use you as His vessel of honour.

Everything in this story seems hopeless, that is the drying brook and the widow's last meal that she is about to eat with her son. God has promised us that He will never leave us alone. God is in control and is taking care of everything. We need to trust God in our painful situations. Do not allow yourself to be a victim of circumstances. The widow of Zarephath was a single and poor mother, she had nothing. She had limited resources but she was willing to meet the needs of others. She served despite her limited resources. We are called to serve my dear sisters. Nothing should stop us from serving others and from serving God. Remember to "Touch a Heart and Reach My World" is what we are called for.

God uses various tests to refine us. Elijah was commanded to go to Zarephath. The word Zarephath means a "smelting place" or a "place of testing". God took Elijah to Zarephath which was a centre of Baal worship, where his faith was to be tested. As we are in this journey of life our faith can be tested. God sometimes brings us to places where He can test our faith. We will get blessings if we exercise our faith, but if we do not we will lose blessings. The widow of Zarephath received blessings because she exercised great faith. She was a woman of faith. She remained faithful to God even if her faith was tested. It was through faith that her meagre supplies were multiplied. God sustained the widow, her son and Elijah through the widow's faith. 1 Kings 17:16 says, "For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah". If this woman had acted differently, the loaf of bread she had prepared would have been her last meal. She acted in faith instead she trusted in God and fed Elijah first.

We are commanded to love each other and to offer hospitality to others (1 Peter 4:8-9). These are God's two greatest commandments. The widow in our

story today was hospitable to Elijah. Hospitality means to welcome guests or visitors and entertain them. This is a sign of our love to God and to others. Let us read Matthew 25:20 and Titus 1:8. My dear sisters let us learn to be hospitable. We must not have excuses or think that we don't have much to share with others. God can take whatever we have and multiply it many times just as he did for this poor widow. God can use the little we have. Yes! Little is much when God is in it.

Appeal

God is willing to make us useful vessels. Jesus is willing to use us regardless of who we are if we accept His calling. We are to stand up and shine for God at school, at home, at work, at church and in our communities. God is looking for people who will stand up for him even if their brooks run dry.

We are called to serve my dear brothers and sisters. Give it all to Jesus! When we give God everything we have, we always gain in the end. When the story began, this woman had only enough food for one meal, but when she gave the prophet of God all she had everything multiplied. 1 Kings 17 v16 says, "For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry". Like this woman let us reach out in faith and put our trust in God. God is willing to use us in His vineyard as his vessels. May you feel convicted by this call and stand up with me as we ask the almighty God to give us the courage and strength to stand up and shine for him wherever we are.

Prayer session

Divide in groups of three and pray for the following:

Praise

- Praise the Lord for his wonderful mercies every day to us
- Praise God for the miracles He performs in our lives
- Praise God for his provision to us, especially when we are in need

Confession

- Plead for God's forgiveness for not trusting Him while in turmoil and difficult situations
- Ask God to forgive you when you try to live the Christian life on our own
- Ask God's forgiveness for not being committed to help others who need our help

Supplication

- Ask God to make us useful vessels for His glory
- Ask God to show you where you can volunteer to help those in need
- Ask God to help us always share whatever we have with others
- Ask God to awaken your soul for His service
- Prayer for women in Cape and Lesotho Conferences.

Closing Hymn: Vernacular Hymn 237 “Stand up stand up for Jesus”

**Poem By: Noluthando Dlamini
Ndo the Poet.**

Spiritually ill,
I'm a surrogate mother to my inner battles.
I seek you Lord in all locations of short lived comfort.

Faint faith employed by thick despair
I'm surprised I'm not broken,
Though my spirit is cracked.
My faith can fit in the cracks of my palms
My prayers are muffed by pain and discourage,
And my sight, is blinded by looking.

God awaken my soul,
And remind me once again how it feels to be loved by you.
Give me a heart that prefers you, and one that desires you.
Help me find truth in your word
And your spirit in my prayers.
Find me Oh God
And awaken my lament soul.

Rescue me.
My God and my King
The waters are rising and I cannot breath.
Wrap your arms
All around me and carry me over.
Awake my soul.