



By: Linda Maydell

Linda Maydell and her husband Les attended Florida College and are now doing foreign evangelism in the Northern Province of South Africa. Linda writes article for women in Africa to help spread the word overseas. To help us understand more clearly what life is like in Africa, Linda shared with me a few things about these women that we here in America should find interesting:

I am writing to an audience where the women are suffering. Some struggle to even exist. Many of their husbands have been unfaithful to them and have brought AIDS into their marriage beds. Many watch their children and grandchildren die of AIDS. Many are struggling to raise grandchildren or sibling's children because their parents have died of AIDS. Many work at back-breaking, menial jobs and consider themselves lucky. Many watch their children grow up and go into the world – the world here is SO evil and SO overwhelming (99% of girls lose their virginity by age 14).

The following is a letter written by Linda on April 2, 2005:

While we were in the USA I heard a wonderful sermon on how we should worship God with our hearts. The preacher said that people would be motivated to worship God from their hearts if they came to know who God is and if they came to know how the men and women of faith in the Bible interacted with Him. Since that time I have studied about three women in the Bible to see how their hearts were towards God, and they have become much more like real people to me. Thinking about their lives has taught me a lot about how to be a woman of God. In this letter I want to share with you a little bit about what I learned about Sarah.

In 1 Peter 3:1-6, God encourages us to be like Sarah – to be her daughters. God says that Sarah was clothed with a meek and quiet spirit and that was very precious to Him. God says that Sarah trusted in Him and was submissive to her husband, calling him lord.

When I thought about the life of Sarah, I was puzzled. Sarah agreed to tell a lie in submissiveness to her husband. Is this the kind of submissiveness that God wants? God says that Sarah had a meek and quiet spirit. When I think about the way Sarah talked Abraham into getting her maid pregnant and then treated the maid so harshly – is that a meek and quiet spirit? So I really studied the life of Sarah and do you know what I found out? I found out that Sarah was just like you and me. She had to LEARN how to be submissive to her husband in the right way. And she had to LEARN how to have the kind of meek and quiet spirit that God wants. Some of us are not married, and some of us will never marry. But all of us want to be precious in God's eyes and so we want to "put on" a meek and quiet spirit.

Before we learn about Sarah, I think we need to understand – what is a meek and quiet spirit? I looked up the word meek in a Bible dictionary. To be meek means to have a spirit that does not fight against God. In order to be meek, you have to be humble. You have to accept that God knows more than you do. That means, if something bad happens to you, or if evil people hurt you (trials), you do not get angry with God. You do not do anything wrong in order to escape the trial. You accept that God can use trials to make you a better person or to bring about some other spiritual good, perhaps in the life of another person. (See James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13.) Therefore you keep doing what is right and look for ways to do good so that good will come from the bad. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is the strength to do what God wants you to do when life is difficult. A person who is meek is able to have a quiet spirit. When I looked up the word quiet I found that it means to have quiet or peace in your heart so that you will cause no disturbance to others. If you are meek, you do not get very excited or very upset or very angry when bad things happen because you are not thinking about yourself. You are thinking about God and accepting what has happened, knowing that God is able to use this bad thing to bring about good. Is it easy to be like this? NO! So how do we get meekness? Let us see how Sarah got meekness.

The very first thing that the Bible tells us about Sarah is found in Genesis 11:30. "But Sarai was barren; she had no child." This was Sarah's trial. In those days people looked down on someone who did not have children. They thought it meant that God was very unhappy with you. (See Genesis 30:2, 23; 20:18 and Luke 1:25.) Sarah was a woman with a heart-ache, a problem, a deep sorrow. This trial lasted for more than 24 YEARS.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we read of the great purpose that God had for Abraham and Sarah. You will remember that the day when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they died spiritually. They were separated from God. God told Eve and the snake in Genesis 3:15 that one day a child (Seed) of a woman would crush the head of the snake, the devil. And so man was given the first promise of hope that one day the snake (who had succeeded in separating man from God) would be crushed and that man would again be able to have fellowship with God, to have spiritual life. We know that the Seed of the woman who crushed the devil was Jesus. He did this by dying for us on the cross. But first he had to be born of a woman. This was God's promise.

Every person born of a woman is born into a nation. God did not want Jesus to be born into just any nation. God wanted the nation to be righteous. He wanted a righteous man to be the father of the nation of Jesus. He chose Abraham for this special purpose. God wanted a woman with a meek and quiet spirit to be the mother of the nation of Jesus. He chose Sarah for this purpose.

Look at the promises that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. "Get out of your country from your family...to a land I will show you. I will make you a great nation....and in you [in your Seed – Genesis 22:18] all the families of the earth will be blessed." If you were Sarah, which of those promises would you be excited about? Surely you would get very excited to hear about a great nation – because there can be no great nation without....children!

However, both Abraham and Sarah had a lot of growing to do before God could use them for His purpose. So God used trials to build their faith. Without faith (trust in God) it is impossible to have a meek and quiet spirit.

The first trial they had to face was leaving their country and their family. Abraham's country (Ur) was a very rich city and a comfortable place to live. We know that it was a rich city because of all the gold that was found there in the tombs of their kings. There were pipes that carried water to the city. There were nice houses inside a very big wall so that they were protected from their enemies. The people were educated. They could read and write and keep accounts. However, there was one very horrible thing about Ur – their idol worship included human sacrifices. I suppose that this was a major reason why God wanted Abraham and Sarah to leave that place.

Nevertheless, it must have been hard to leave the physical comforts of Ur and live in a tent. But to me, the worst thing would have been the fear of being killed. In those days there were no police. Each city protected itself by building a large wall. If you were traveling in a tent, you had no protection. Abraham was very worried about this. He was afraid that people who met them would see Sarah's beauty and kill him in order to have Sarah for a wife. He said to Sarah, "This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'" (Genesis 20:13) Is this meekness or weakness? God had promised to make a great nation of Abraham and Sarah. Could God do this through a dead man? We can see that Abraham and Sarah's faith in God was still weak. However, they did have enough faith to obey the command of God to leave Ur and travel to a place they did not know, even though they had fear in their hearts. This was a good way for their faith to grow.

When they got to Canaan, God appeared to Abraham and told him, "To you and your descendants I will give this land."(Genesis 12:7). Now were their worries over? Did God reward them right away for obeying Him and moving away from Ur? Could they move into a walled city and get a comfortable house and be secure and start having children? No! There was another trial. Sarah did not get pregnant and there was not enough food. "Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land....And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, '...Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for

your sake, and that I may live because of you.’ So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh’s house.”(Genesis 12:10-15)

What were the consequences of this lie? Things seemed to go well at first: “He [Pharaoh] treated Abraham well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.”(Genesis 10:16) However, Sarah and Abraham both must have lived in terrible fear, wondering when they would be “caught out.” On top of that, “the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.” How would you feel if many people were suffering because of your lie!

Even though Abraham and Sarah did not deserve God’s grace and goodness, He protected them from Pharaoh, and Pharaoh sent them away without harming them. However, their faith was not yet strong enough for God to use them to be the father and mother of the great nation of Jesus. If God wills, in another letter I will share more with you about how God worked with Abraham and Sarah to help them develop stronger faith.

Right now I want you to stop and think of the trials you may be facing at this time. It could be barrenness. It could be famine. It could be illness, death of a loved one, poverty, a husband who abuses you, not being able to find a husband at all, or many other things. Some trials, like illness, you can do nothing about. But other trials – you can choose to escape them by doing evil. To escape your trial of poverty, you could steal. To escape the husband who abuses you, you could leave him. To try to get a husband, you could let a young man have your body. However, if you have a meek and quiet spirit, you will not try to escape your trial by doing evil, you will accept your trial as God’s way of strengthening you (meekness) and keep on doing good. Abraham and Sarah chose to try to escape their trial by doing evil. Although God protected them physically, He did not at that time take away Sarah’s barrenness. They were not yet ready to be used as the instruments of God. God has a purpose for us too. Perhaps God wants to use us to win someone to Christ by our actions (1 Peter 3:1-2). Perhaps God wants outsiders to see our good works and glorify Him. (1 Peter 2:12) Perhaps God sees that we need to develop more patience. (James 1:2-4) Perhaps the trial we are presently going through is going to help to achieve God’s purpose. Therefore I want to encourage all of us, dear sisters, to strive by all means to develop a meek and quiet spirit so that God can use us to bring about good and so that God can lift us up from our trials. “Be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, *that He may exalt you in due time*, casting all your care upon Him, for **He cares for you.**”

You are all in my prayers. May our wonderful God, in whom we can confidently place our trust, be with you and bless you. With love, Linda Maydell