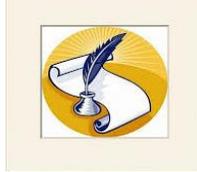

The Writer's Inkhorn

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Continuing Reflections on the Word for Your Personal Growth in Christ

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Women of Faith for Such Critical Times



Summer is a great time for parents to retool intellectually, after the stresses of the school year. Much time has been spent in getting children to complete homework and class projects, and just generally staying on top of the incredible amount of school stuff to which they must attend. Just as children should actively and regularly be reading during the summer, so should parents. For the children, most schools now have reading lists that help prepare children for the next academic year. For parents, a visit to a local bookstore or asking recommendations from friends can be helpful as well. Where does that leave the rest of us who are not parents or grandparents? We need to be retooling also, but ours should be an ongoing pursuit of knowledge since we have a bit more time to dedicate to personal growth and development.

In this issue of the *Writer's Inkhorn* I have chosen to provide some reading material focused on faith and some women in the Bible in hopes of adding to your knowledge. Some of the women briefly presented here may be ones you have heard about while others you may not have known about at all. Some of the women are named and some of them are unnamed, but they or their lives can represent various aspects of faith and types of faith, as has been revealed to me. These women's stories were included in the canon of Scripture as much for our learning and admonition as was everything else that is there.

Finally, I challenge each of you readers to determine where your faith is, how it is being manifested, and how you can strengthen it for these critical times within which we are living.

The first of these women I'll mention is Esther. As a young woman, Esther's actions represented **the obedient side of faith** in that she

was willing to listen to her cousin, Mordecai, who was raising her as his own daughter after her parents' death. Because of her obedience to her cousin, she became a Jewish queen of a Gentile nation. Let us not forget that she lived among the Jewish exiles that had been carried away to Babylon.

Esther's story is a beautiful one to study because even after she became queen, she still honored God *and* her cousin and was still reachable and teachable. Have you seen young women who get a little piece of education or a job and suddenly no one can tell them anything anymore? Believe it or not, some husbands have experienced that. And even in churches, some who have received a little elevation in ministry or church work can no longer be entreated by the mothers and fathers of the church because they suddenly know as much as them. As people of faith, we can never let ourselves get ***beyond*** being reachable or teachable. And know that if we ever get to that point, ***God*** cannot use us in the way that ***He*** wants to, since He often chooses to reach us through His people. We must be ready to ***hear*** (receive into our spirits) the voice of God *and* willingly ***obey***.

The most beautiful and well-known verse in the book of Esther: "...*and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" were her cousin's words to her, and as a result of her willingness to **listen** and **obey** his directives, the Jewish people were saved from destruction.

And there is so much more to learn from Esther's story. For instance, the deposing of Vashti *from* and the rise of Esther *to* the throne, the sleeplessness of King Xerxes and the discovery of his indebtedness to Mordecai for saving his life, Haman's rise and humiliation and fall, and the miraculous deliverance of the Jews, ***all*** combine to help us see **just how God orchestrates events** for the care of His people. God is ***always*** in control. These things were not

just accidents or coincidences. God knows exactly what is going on at all times in your life. All we need to do is to remain faithful to whatever He has said. Obedience will bring its own reward.

Ruth represented **faith that expresses itself in devotion**. Rather than return to her pagan gods, Ruth held on to the faith of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and was richly rewarded, indeed. She ended up with a good husband who was well able to provide for her, and she also became the great-grandmother of King David. Although that was certainly not her intent, Ruth's devotion and steadfast love brought these blessings of God into her life. And what is interesting here, too, is that she listened as well, to Naomi, and was obedient to the directions she was given for what to do to obtain Boaz's favor. More of us need to learn how to sit still and not be anxious until God has worked things out on our behalf.

And do you remember Rahab? Rahab represented **the faith that comes by hearing**. She is included among the faithful in Hebrews 11:31. The writer said, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Like Mary Magdalene, and other women like them, "those who are forgiven much, the same love much." We don't *know* what some women have been through when they come into the knowledge of God. Rahab had only *heard* of the God of Israel and what he had done for them, but she hid the spies in faith. Sometimes, women like Rahab will come to believe and get a far greater blessing and a lot sooner than the children of the kingdom that have been sitting there all the time, in the way, and in their unbelief. Isn't that a sad thing?

The spies who *saw* what God had done for Israel in bringing them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, did not believe that God would give them the Promised Land. Yet, one who had only *heard* the news, believed in the God of Israel even when Israel did not have faith in her *own* God to deliver His promises on her behalf. The Bible considers Rahab a woman of faith; she is listed as an ancestress of Christ in Matthew 1:5 as the mother of Boaz (yes, the same Boaz that married Ruth). I wonder why we never talk about Rahab as the other mother-in-law of Ruth? Perhaps she was already deceased by the time Ruth came along; that's a speculation for another time.

The woman of Samaria with her previous five husbands and current live-in boyfriend or adulterous affair or whatever, here represents **new-found faith**, and so did the woman taken in adultery – newfound faith in a Christ Who saves and delivers and forgives **all** of our sins at the very moment we first encounter Him, rather than a Christ Who just condemns and lets us self-destruct. The late Mother Willie Mae Haywood, a woman of faith from my own family used to sing this old hymn:

Neither do I condemn thee, wonderful words of thine, falling from the lips of the Savior, precious love divine. Wonderful words of Jesus, tell it o'er and o'er; neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

Which ones of you will carry *this* message to embrace *that* woman? These are critical times and many are looking for the love of God rather than the condemnation we so quickly offer. We, too, had to find faith before we could be found faithful. Let us not forget.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel represented **a determined faith**, and so did the woman with the issue of blood. Like Hannah, even if or when the preacher reads you as drunk, don't you worry about that; you just keep on praying. The Lord is nigh you and will hear and answer. He has promised. And God did answer both of these women. Hannah birthed a son – Samuel, the last of the judges and first of the prophets in the kingdom era of Israel. The woman with the issue of blood received her healing from Jesus because of her determined faith. Do not let other people's opinions of you, or the condition you are in stop you from your pursuit of the Divine. God acknowledges and move because of our faith.

And Jochebed, Moses' mother represented **faith in times of crises**. When she knew that she had to protect her son against the king's decree, she willingly took a chance and made a basket to preserve her son's life. Hundreds of years later, Nehemiah said to Israel when they were facing opposition:

..Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses. (Nehemiah 4:14b)

We, too, are in a crisis and we must fight for our sons and our daughters and our houses. Almost daily, our children are dying in the streets. And some of those who are in authority seem to care less for large segments of the population. But we need to remember that the Lord Whom we serve “is great and terrible;” He will fight for us and with us, but we have to be willing to step out in faith.

Have you heard of the five daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 26 and 27)? They represented **courageous faith** in a God who is just. They stood up for themselves when the laws said that a father’s inheritance was to be passed on to his sons. Their father had no sons so they went to Moses, Eleazer the priest, the elders and the congregation and presented their case. Moses took their cause before the Lord, and **the Lord** told Moses those girls were right, that they **should** receive their father’s inheritance. So the law was changed from that point on. Who among you are not afraid to approach the powers that be when laws are unjust and people are being disenfranchised? Our God is a God of justice and he cares deeply about the poor and oppressed. We need many more modern day daughters of courageous faith who are not afraid to enter the political arena and the fray of the marketplace on behalf of others, especially in these critical times.

And there was Rhoda -- the young woman who answered the door and told the saints it was Peter whom they were praying for to get out of prison. Rhoda represented **the fervent faith of youth** -- those who believe that the God we taught them about is able to do **anything** and **everything**, and have not let the circumstances of life dampen their faith. Rhoda **believed** it was Peter and held on to what she knew in faith, even when the older saints told her she was crazy. We need to watch out for the mixed signals we are sometimes sending our youth. We need to ask ourselves whether we **really** believe that what we’re praying to happen **will** happen? The young people do!

The Shunammite woman represented **in-spite-of faith** – faith that says it is well, in spite of my circumstances. Even when her son was dead, she held on in faith and God raised her son back to life through the prophet Elisha. Are there others among you who have in-spite-of faith?

Remember Sapphira, the wife of Ananias? She represented **misplaced faith**. She believed in

her husband and the scheme they cooked up **more than** she believed in the power of God to see through their deception. They had **a zeal** for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2); they had a form of godliness, but were denying the power thereof (II Tim 3:5). They **appeared** to have good and noble intentions, but their hearts were deceitful. Be careful, because when your faith is misplaced, you’ll likely find yourself doing the wrong things for the right reasons, or the right things for the wrong reasons. People of faith, the times that we’re living in require that our hearts and our motives are pure before God.

And there are other women of faith that I have read about from the more recent past whose lives and work continue to inspire me in my own journey to have an impact on **this** generation. Women like Mother Amanda Smith – a Negro holiness evangelist who lived from 1835 to 1915, and traveled and preached internationally because she had **faith that God would provide** the means necessary for her to do so. Will you go on the faith that God will provide for you?

Several years ago, I was asked to study about and do a dramatic presentation of the life of Mother Frances Cabrini, a Catholic nun, for a retreat center named in her honor. What I found out about her **faith put into action** has inspired me ever since. She lived during the lifetime of Mother Amanda Smith, from 1850 to 1917, and the record shows that Mother Frances Cabrini was frail and sickly for most of her life. She died at the age of 67 and at the time of her death she had founded exactly **67** institutions such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages around the world. So I ask myself, in my able-bodied, fat and fine state, what record will I leave on the sands of time? Will **I** have fulfilled the purpose God ordained for **my** life? Do I **know** why God has brought me into the kingdom for such a time as this? Am I putting my faith into action?

And I have known women of faith in my own family and in my lifetime who have left a rich legacy of faith in my life. As Paul said to young Timothy of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, the sincere faith that dwelt in them, Paul was convinced was in Timothy also. One of my grandmother’s testimonies was that God raised her from the dead. I was in the house when and where it happened. My mother and my aunts, Annie Bee

and Rosie Lee were with her when the breath left her body. Annie Bee was so hysterical they had to put her out of the room (in her defense, she was the baby of the family). But my mother and Aunt Rosie Lee got down on their knees and prayed. My late pastor, Elder Alonzo Temple arrived and also joined them in prayer, and all of them prayed until God brought my grandmother back. And she lived about another thirty years after that.

And I say to you grandmothers and mothers of faith, you may never travel overseas or establish an institution, or subdue a nation, but never **ever** underestimate the power of imparting faith into the lives of your children and grandchildren. It is an amazing thing how that faith can be sealed in their hearts even when their lives are turned away from God. I see it in the lives of some of my own cousins who are still out there. They **know** beyond all doubt that the God Grandmama said was able, *is* able, and those of us who are walking with God have faith that someday God will bring them in before it is too late.

Dear people of faith, know that you are not here by accident. You have a divine purpose, and have been endowed with unique gifts and talents that are to be used in the service of humanity. If you do not yet know your “why,” pray and ask God, “Lord, why have You brought me to the kingdom for such a time as this?” As much as you might like to, you cannot stay in the spa forever getting beauty treatments. That represents a life of ease. Like Esther, at some point you must come and stand before the King. Sometimes you might even have to leave the palace of your fine home, and get down and dirty with the masses. You may have to shed your finery for sackcloth and ashes. Will you be willing? Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Will you be able to answer as did the prophet, “Here am I; send me?” There is a clarion call – brilliantly clear – a call to action. Do you hear the voice of Jesus calling for such a time as this? What are you waiting for? Women of faith, arise, and shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

The King’s business – Christ, **your** King – requires haste. What can be more urgent than the fact that our children are dying in the streets. Jeremiah declared,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the cunning women, that they may come: And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters ... hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbor lamentation.” [Why?]
“For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. (9:17, 18, 20, 21)

Our times are troubled and perilous; the dangers are real **every** day for our grandchildren and children as they head out to school and try to return home. Will you be on your wailing walls, in your prayer closets, and on your knees at your altars? God has brought all of us into *His* kingdom for such critical times as these.

Will you go out into the highways and hedges and **compel** men and women to come into God’s house? When the children *are* come to be birthed, will there be enough strength among you to bring them forth? There is much work to be done in the kingdom. Are you ready? Will you go out of your neighborhood, your local church, your denomination, your country? Where will your faith lead you to minister? What doors will your faith open for you? When will you use your gifts and talents? What are you saving them for? Who will stand and be men and women of faith that God can use in such critical times as these? Now, go back and review faith as expressed throughout this piece; they are bolded to make it easier for you to do some reflection and self-examination. And may you live into your divine purpose with greater faith and fervor, and *without* fear.

Your Teacher and Sister,
Dr. Mary Webster Moore

Contact me. May I assist you? I am available for speaking and workshops and I am dedicated to adding value to the lives of others. Reach me at 773.735.8713 or mary.webster@trnty.edu

