

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

16 Living Portraits

By Margaret Williams Stevens

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PUBLISHED BY

ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

95church.com

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STORY OF THE PLAY

There are more than 50 women in the foreground of biblical history; 150 named women in the background, and some 100 nameless women appearing only as daughters, wives, mothers, and widows.

Here are the stories of 16 women who played vital roles in our religious beginnings. As each Biblical woman steps into a life-sized picture frame, they pose in tableau while a narrator tells her personal story. Lovely to look at and simple to stage with no memorization, this living portraits play makes the women of the Bible very real.

PLAYING TIME: 45 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Description of characters, costumes, props, and stances are on each portrait page.)

Narrator *(Can wear Biblical or modern clothing)*

Sarah, Abraham's Wife

Rebekah, Isaac's Wife

Rachel and Leah, Daughters of Laban

Jochebed, Mother of Moses

Miriam, Sister of Moses

Jephthah's Daughter

Ruth, Sister of Orpha and Daughter-in-Law of Naomi

Abigail, Nabal's Wife

Esther, The Jewess

Elizabeth, Mother of John the Baptist

Mary and Martha, Friends of Jesus

Samaritan Woman at the Well

Mary Magdalene

Mary, Mother of Jesus

PRODUCTION NOTES

FOR PICTURE FRAME: Use 2x4's, depth of frame box 4'

Frame, when finished, will be like a huge black box with skeleton braces across top and down back corners to which the muslin will be affixed. All muslin should be tacked except for edges toward the rear on each side. These will be the entrance and exits spots. One solid piece of black muslin or cotton should be tacked in place across the back of the frame. Should be far enough back so as not to interfere with entrance and exits. This back piece measures 60" wide and 60" long.

Two strips, 36" wide and 17' long, go up each side, over the top, and down the other side, thus leaving entrance and exits toward the back on both sides.

Woman can come in from one side, poses, and leave through the other, thus avoiding collision with each other. Any props can be lined up on entrance side in advance because all movement is done in the dark.

A spotlight above center front and one in one of the frame corners should be sufficient, however one in both front and lower corners can be used if desired. A rheostat to control lighting from low to full spot is best for full effect. Narrator should begin at full light.

For best effect, add soft music (can be taped) between portrait poses. Total blackout after each page of narration. Women exit and enter as quietly as possible with next in line ready to step in place.

Timing is essential and operator of lighting, organist, and narrator must virtually work in the dark. Narrator should be off to the side so that nothing conflicts with the beautiful effect of the living portraits. If necessary narrator may use a shielded light.

Women should be sure they are not wearing any wristwatches or earrings, and unless bottom of frame is high enough to cover feet, no hose or shoes. Sandals with straps may be appropriate, nothing elaborate.

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(AT RISE: Soft spot on NARRATOR as she begins.)

NARRATOR: "And from the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman." Genesis 2:22 There are more than 50 women in the foreground of Biblical history; some 150 named women in the background, and 100 other, nameless women, the latter appearing only as daughters, wives, mothers, and widows.

(Stage dark while SARAH takes her place in the frame. Soft MUSIC background, offstage.)

DESCRIPTION of SARAH: Older woman, strong but pleasing features, auburn hair in braid around head. Multi-colored flowing robes, veil which partially hides her face.

PROPS/STANCE: Kneels on pillow, side view face uplifted in prayerful attitude.

(Shielded LIGHT to read, rheostat up gradually on SARAH.)

SARAH

And God said thus to Abraham,
"Go from thine own ... thy native land,
Unto a land that I will show,
And make of thee a nation great."

And so it was, in their late years,
That Abraham and Sarah chose
The wanderings, nomadic life,
Far from the country of their birth.

And Sarah, praying for a son,
Did bear a child in her old age.
And Isaac grew in stature strong,
And with a deepening love of God.

His faith withstood the knowledge that
He was to be a sacrifice.
Brave Sarah watched her loved ones go
Devoutly trying to accept
The bitter loss of her small son.

The Lord spared Abraham his grief,
And to the altar sent a ram.
The Mother of the Nations wept ...
In grateful prayer before her God.

(Rheostat out. SARAH exits. REBEKAH enters.)

DESCRIPTION of REBEKAH: Dark hair, slightly aquiline nose, firm mouth. Wears delft blue dress with headdress of scarlet and purple. Neckline gold-trimmed to match bracelets, necklace and earring of gold.

PROPS/STANCE: Stands facing audience. Holds water jug on shoulder with one hand.

(Shielded LIGHT to read, rheostat up gradually on REBEKAH.)

REBEKAH

Isaac had passed the age of forty
And had not yet married.
Therefore, Abraham, his father called
His servant to him and said,
“Go forth with animals and gifts of gold
And find thee a suitable wife for my son.”
Being a prayerful man, the servant beseeched God
To send a maiden to the well by the trees
One who would give of him to drink,
And his camels and sheep also.

And God sent Rebekah of Nahor to draw water,
Seeing the servant Rebekah said, “Thou art weary,

End of Freeview

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