

# FAR ABOVE RUBIES



## WOMEN OF FAITH

I love to read about great women of faith and one of my home grown “heroes” is Amy Carmichael. Born in Millisle in 1867, Amy served with her family in several churches until she received the call of God to missions after hearing Hudson Taylor speak at the Keswick Convention in 1887. Amy then served the Lord in India for 55 years without furlough. That’s dedication!

During this time Amy provided sanctuary for over 1,000 children who were being forced into prostitution in Hindu Temples to earn money for the priests. Thankfully, temple prostitution was outlawed in India in 1948. Amy also opened an orphanage and founded the Dohnavur Fellowship, which still operates to this day. Amy wrote many books and served the Lord in India until she received her home call at the grand old age of 83!

Although we cannot help but be inspired by great women of faith we must remember that they were not super heroes but just ordinary women with the call of God on their lives. Is there something God is calling you to do? It may not be to go to India, but perhaps something in your local assembly where workers are always needed.

There are many great women of faith in the Bible, but there is one whose name is mentioned more times than any other and, in fact, she is one of only two women mentioned in the chapter about faith (Hebrews 11). She is, of course, Sarah, wife of Abraham. When Abraham received the call of God we see that *“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”* (Heb.11:8) Also in Hebrews 11:11 we read that *“By faith Sarah herself received also strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”* (NKJV)

When Sarah and Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans it would not have been regarded as a great career move. It would have required **sacrifice**. In Ur they enjoyed a high standard of living and now they were going to live in tents in a place they didn't know. Archaeological discoveries have shown that Ur was a centre of advanced culture, with libraries in the schools and temples. People used dictionaries, encyclopaedias and textbooks on maths, religion and politics! To truly follow God will always require sacrifice.

When Sarah went with Abraham to Canaan we see that she was a **submissive wife**. Sarah loved Abraham and would follow him whenever and wherever he went. Today, many women cringe at the word “*submit*” but it is very scriptural: Col 3:18-19 states, “*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter against them.*” Submitting means giving your husband his rightful place as head of the house - even if he isn't saved! It doesn't mean however, that you should compromise your Christian principles or go against God's word, which is exactly what Sarah did when she lied for Abraham.

Scripture tells us that Sarah was a “*beautiful woman*” and, fearful that the Egyptians might kill him, Abraham persuades Sarah to lie for him by pretending to be his **sister**. When Sarah moved into the palace with Pharaoh, he lavished sheep, oxen, asses and servants on Abraham. Things appeared to be going well, and then God stepped in. Genesis 12:17 tells us that God punished Pharaoh and his house with great plagues “*because of Sarah.*” We must remember that there are always consequences for sin – not only to us but to others. You just have to look at how whole families are affected through adultery, drunkenness and anger, to mention a few.

After 10 years, we see from Genesis 16:1–3 that Abraham and Sarah still had no children. This began to eat away at Sarah so she decided to devise a little scheme and help God out! Yes Sarah was a **schemer**. She began to get impatient and doubt God's word. The thing is that when we scheme and try to do things our way, apart from God's will, our plans often blow up in our face, and this is exactly what happened to Sarah.

When Sarah told Abraham to take Hagar the maid as his wife and have a child by her Abraham obeyed – there was no argument, no mention of the promises God had given them. How easily we can forget God's promises.

Hagar was probably taken as a **slave** from Egypt and was now Sarah's

property. Nobody asked Hagar how she felt about this arrangement. She had absolutely no say in the matter. However, when Hagar got pregnant she probably felt she had the upper hand and began to flaunt it. This made Sarah feel both humiliation and devastation which then turned to anger. In her fury Sarah blamed Abraham for what she had actually suggested!

Sarah got very jealous and angry at Hagar and in Genesis 16:6 we see that she *“dealt harshly”* with her. Jealousy and anger are not only very powerful emotions but are sins which need to be kept under control. Feeling worthless and alone Hagar fled for safety into the wilderness. This is how our enemy, the devil, wants us to feel. He will do anything to isolate you from fellowship and make you feel unloved. However, we have a God who loves us unconditionally and who will never leave us nor forsake us. God knows exactly where we are and is always pursuing us.

God met Hagar at the point of her need in the wilderness and told her to go back to Sarah. He said she would have a son and was to call him Ishmael, and that He would multiply her seed exceedingly (Genesis 16:10-11). Hagar gave birth to Ishmael when Abraham was 86, but he was not the child of promise. Ishmael was born through impatience and lack of faith which has resulted in strife and conflict in the Middle East ever since.

In Genesis 18 we see that Sarah was a **sceptic**. When three angels visit Abraham, Sarah overhears them telling him that he and Sarah would have a son in the Spring and the Bible says *“she laughed.”* She thought it was impossible. Before we judge Sarah we also need to remember that we too can get very sceptical about what God can or cannot do. Do we sometimes think that some sicknesses are harder to heal than others? Not for God! In Genesis 18:14 God rhetorically asks, *“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”*

True to His word we see that the Lord visited Sarah and she conceived, and gave birth to their **son** Isaac (Genesis 21:1-3). Isaac was the child of promise through whom Abraham would become the father of a multitude of nations and Sarah the *“mother of nations”* (Genesis 17:15-16). Sarah was just an ordinary woman, who wasn't perfect, but who believed God and became a great woman of faith. May we also hold fast to the promises of God and be obedient to His word.