IN ALL SEASONS- EPISODE 3- Mature Women in the Bible

Welcome to **IN ALL SEASONS**. I am Beverly Flanagan, your host on this podcast, for women like me, in the second half of life.

In this episode, we return to our question from last week. How does LIVING WISELY, AGING WELL relate to our purpose in life? As women? As Christian women?

In our culture & society today, emphasis is on youth, being young, looking young. Men & women both go to great lengths to preserve their looks, their health, buying into all kinds of anti-aging products & services. If Age-ism is indeed a problem-- and I say that it is-- working with elders & becoming one myself-- then we are contributing to our own marginalization. Is this really what God wants for us?

There is a common belief that we gradually become less useful as we grow older. That this world is made for the young. Perhaps that is so. Perhaps not! But we are not of this world. When we live our lives for God, our journey here does not end until we take our final breath. Should you be finding yourself feeling a little bit forgotten, overlooked, unappreciated…or looking down on yourself because of getting older..... take care to remember that God will use you at any age, and any stage. There is no age limit to the way He works, and His is a love that never grows old.

Who are our models? Specifically, who are our Biblical role models?

We talked briefly about Eve, The Proverbs 31 Woman, Martha & Mary, and the Titus 2 woman. All foundational for our understanding, & different ages.

Today we're going to talk about four mature Bible Women and their spiritual legacies. Who are they? How do we know for a fact they were "mature"?

We can guess the age range of some Bible women by comparison with other individuals in their story. For example:

- We can deduce that Rebekah was an old woman, when she helped her son Jacob deceive his father; Isaac her husband was old (Genesis 27).
- Miriam should have been an old woman when she sang and danced after crossing the Red Sea; she was older than her brother Moses (Exodus 15).

However, we know for certain that **Sarah, Naomi, Elizabeth and Anna** were mature, because that fact is stated in the text. Usually, there is reason for stating one's aging status, and we will find that among their other assets, the one common reason their lives concern us is their significant legacy.

SARAH: SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

"Sarah obeyed Abraham and spoke to him respectfully. You became Sarah's daughters by not letting anything make you afraid to do good" 1 Peter 3: 6

"Sarah is the only woman in Scripture whose age, death, and burial are mentioned [Genesis 23:1], probably to do honor to the venerable mother of the Hebrew people." - this according to *Jamieson-Fausset*-in the *Brown Bible Commentary* She is also one of the two women mentioned in the Faith Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11:11). This was *after* she had been presumptuous in arranging for her maid Hagar to bear a child for her husband Abraham. She was helping God to fulfill His promise of making Abraham the Father of a great nation. The result was chaos, but God forgave her faithless bravery.

When at last, God blessed Sarah at age ninety with her own baby, her motherhood instinct took over. She aimed to protect the interest of her child Isaac, by ordering Hagar and her baby Ishmael to leave the household. All throughout the household drama, her loyalty toward her husband and her desire for his success remained intact.

Sarah's greatest legacy is rooted in her commitment to family: her love and respect for Abraham, as well as her courage to pursue what she considers best for him. As wife to the Father of the Jewish Nation, she inherits his spiritual offspring and becomes Mother of a Nation. Her legacy is **SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD**.

Read all about Sarah in these Scriptures: **Genesis 17-18:1-15; 20:1-21; 23: 1,2,19: Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:6.**

NAOMI: MENTORING

[Ruth to Naomi] ***"Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God"*** (Ruth 1: 16).

Naomi was not always the perfect woman of faith. When she suffered the loss of her husband and two sons (late husbands of Orpah and Ruth) her first attitude was not one to imitate, although it was one that human beings can understand: ***"The hand of the Lord has gone out against me***!" (Ruth 1:13)

She tried to discourage her former daughters-in-law from returning with her to her native country. She explained that she was too old to have children, whom they could not wait on, anyway. Orpah took Naomi's advice and stayed. However, when Ruth insisted on following the old woman, her desire (stated in the key verse above) gave a glimpse into how great an influence the old woman had on her.

Naomi's legacy is **MENTORING**. Her temporary expressions of despair and doubt could not distract Ruth from the faith which she [Naomi] consistently demonstrated.

In Naomi's homeland, she mentored Ruth in the Hebrew lifestyle and helped her find a new husband. Naomi assumed the roles of mother and grandmother to Ruth and her son Obed, who became an ancestor of Jesus Christ. What if every old woman became such a positive mentor to one younger woman?

Does this remind us of the Titus 2 Woman?

Read all about Naomi in the **Book of Ruth**.

ELIZABETH: FAITH

"Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age . . . For with God nothing will be impossible". (Luke 1: 36, 37).

Spoken by the Angel Gabriel, to a young as yet unmarried woman in Nazareth by the name of Mary, announcing she had been chosen to be the mother of the

Messiah, the Son of God, these words were meant to reassure her. And they did prompt her to visit Elizabeth, to see if the words were true, and they were!

There were five other instances of healed barrenness recorded before Elizabeth's. The women of favor were Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Manoah's wife- who was Samson's mother, one of the Judges of Israel- and Hannah in the Old Testament.

In the number six spot was Elizabeth, whose prayer was answered with an extraordinary blessing—the child who became John the Baptist, announcer to the world that Jesus, the seventh (symbol of completeness) miraculous birth was the Messiah.

Elizabeth and her husband devoted their lives to God. They were both from priestly families and hoped like other devout Jews that they would give birth to the promised Messiah. She may have feared that her barrenness excluded her and even exposed her to disgrace; but in God's time, He delivered her unexpected surprise. Her baby was not the Messiah, but her rejoicing could not be any greater.

Elizabeth's legacy is **FAITH**: believing in God, no matter the outcome. She accepted that He performs in perfect timing, and in our best interest. Her long-awaited son became the herald for the Messiah.

Read all about Elisabeth in **Luke 1: 5-63**.

ANNA: DEVOTION

"This woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day" (Luke 2: 37).

After seven years of marriage, Anna (also called Hannah) became a widow. If she spent all eighty-four years of widowhood in constant devotion, as the text suggests, she reflected on other aspects of life besides the heartache and disappointment caused by her loss. There were other issues she engaged in with God.

She was always in attendance at the Temple services. She made prayer and fasting part of her daily routine. Her life of constant devotion was probably difficult for wives and mothers to imitate, but she illustrated one way that widows and other lonely people can make their lives useful. No crying over the life she missed or the children she might have had; instead she chose to consecrate her total self to service for God.
When the eight-day old Jesus was presented in the Temple, the devout old man Simeon recognized him as the Christ Child; and right alongside him with an equal gift of discernment was Anna.

She had grown old in the service of the sanctuary, and having seen, with Simeon, God's Salvation, was ready to depart in peace. How encouraging it is to meet those who through a long life have remained true to the Lord and whose gray hairs are honorable because of a life lived in the divine will, and who, when they pass away, are ready for glory.

Anna's legacy is **DEVOTION**. She gave the first female testimony of Jesus, the Christ. She demonstrated then and now, that sincere devotion brings the benefit of joy and fulfillment.

Read about Anna in **Luke 2: 36-38.** Her appearance in the Bible may brief, but her story is memorable, and her witness is of great consequence. We can be encouraged by her testimony, as Christians, and as Christian women.

In the next episode of **IN ALL SEASONS**, we are going to talk about CAREGIVING AS A SPIRITUAL PATH. Statistically women are very likely to be caregivers in their lifetime, to the younger generation, to the older generation, to those who are dying. We have tended to certain professions and trades, such as Nursing, Teaching, & Social Work. Is caregiving something we take on as needed, unprepared, maybe reluctantly? Do we see its VALUE-- not just to those we care for, but for ourselves? Do we see it as a Spiritual Path?

Signing off for today, and thank you for joining me on **IN ALL SEASONS**!

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