

Biblical Women

FASHION SHOW

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In 1994, Presbyterian Women from Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, shared a resource created by their group. Noting that “finding new and interesting ideas for a program for Presbyterian Women is the bane of all planning committees,” their group created a biblical women fashion show to stage as the group received the Birthday Offering.

Since that time, the resource has been requested year in and year out by other PW groups (who either saw it or have heard legend of it!). It's a piece that offers a funny yet faithful look at our biblical foremothers . . . and the fashions that were a part of their legacy. While not all of the women are role models, they model the ways that we struggle with or succeed in opening ourselves to God's presence. They show the various gifts we can share

with God's people in service to Jesus' message of radical love. It's also a way to live into the joy of being God's children. Despite our flaws and foibles, the ways we convince ourselves we're bit players (at best), and the injustices of the world, God works through each of us.

Consider staging this biblical women fashion show for your next PW event. The PW group from Clarks Summit said, “The models were chosen from throughout the congregation. Our [primary pool] was, of course, Presbyterian Women in the Congregation. We also chose adult women not currently active in PW, teenagers and younger girls. The show lasted 20 minutes. Part of the enjoyment was seeing which ‘modern’ woman was which biblical woman.”

Some of the casting notes include age recommendations (based on scripture), but you can always be flexible! The costume notes also are up for adaptation; some costumes aim for historical accuracy, while others take a more modern “tongue in cheek” approach.

Many thanks to PW at Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit—particularly PW moderator Nelsen Gregory who had the idea and Charlotte Lyon and Barbara Lodwick, who wrote the script. And because Presbyterian Women love Bible study, some of the women's stories have been examined through additional lenses than at the time the script was created. The script has been adjusted in light of these new interpretations.*

List of Models and Costumes

Eve—nude body suit or ballet leotard, fig-leaf apron

Ms. Noah—hip boots, fishing vest, fishing hat and fish net

Sarah—colorful poncho or robe, skirt, veil (scarf), sandals

Ms. Lot—head to toe in a white sheet (our pillar of salt)

Rebekah—sandals or bare feet, long skirt, headpiece, carrying a jug

Miriam—long skirt, peasant blouse, tambourine, jewelry (Ideally, someone who will move with the music or sing a cappella.)

Deborah—minister's black robe, gavel (Ideally, a woman who can look stern and loving at the same time.)

Delilah—flowy dress with pockets, worn off-the-shoulder, carrying a pair of scissors and braid of hair (Samson's), bag of money

Ruth—hiking boots, large cape that can double as a bedroll

Hannah—caftan, holding a small child's coat

Woman of Endor—headscarf, flowy dress, large jewelry, holding a crystal ball

Bathsheba—bathing suit and cover-up, carrying a towel

Esther—regal-looking woman, long skirts, crown

Mary, Mother of Jesus—an obviously pregnant woman (or a woman with a pillow stuffed in her clothes!), dressed in white and blue

Anna—an older woman or someone wearing a gray wig, shawl and long skirt

Salome—preteen or teenager wearing dance attire (belly dancer, ballet dancer, hip hop dancer—you decide!)

Martha—housedress or other comfortable clothing, apron, rubber gloves, headscarf, carrying a feather duster

Mary Magdalene—all black clothing, covered in black cloak or robe

Eunice—long skirts, layered, apron or smock with many pockets (like an artist's or teacher's apron)

Dorcus—caftan with embroidery, carrying an embroidery hoop

Priscilla—non-wrinkling suit, tote bag, Greek sorority letters on shirt or mug, sensible shoes, understated jewelry

Lydia—all in purple, carrying a basket filled with purple dye or purple cloth

The Script

A narrator describes each model as she comes out.

Eve, our first model, shows us hints of how our God wanted us to look in the world. But then, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden apple. Now Eve wears a fig leaf apron—the hottest new fashion in the Garden of Eden.

Ms. Noah is next. Can you believe that you would be asked by your spouse to go on a houseboat excursion, and not only with him and your family, but with umpteen animals, too? And you agree to the trip, knowing that it will rain for 40 days and nights? Our model shows us the latest fashion for those rainy days and nights.

Next, **Sarah** displays this power poncho, ready for the road, yet lovely enough to wear to a tent-side brunch. Covered in this colorful topper, and a veil that partially covers the



Eve



Rebekah

face, you look and feel like a princess. In this sturdy but elegant array, you can travel for days and still feel refreshed. Find it in Genesis stores around the Fertile Crescent and south along the Mediterranean.

And now **Ms. Lot**, a worldly, selfish, woman who spent lavishly and entertained elaborately. Note her column dress of sparkly crystals. She married her daughters off to Sodomite men of low ethical ideals and morals. Ms. Lot shows us what can happen when you disobey the angel of God. ZAP! You're a pillar of salt.

Rebekah is next. A thirsty traveler met Rebekah as she was drawing water from the well. When he asked for a drink from her pitcher, she poured it for him and then drew water for his camels. Little did Rebekah realize that the traveler was on a mission from Abraham to find Isaac a wife. She's wearing the latest fashion from Mesopotamia.

Miriam is next. With Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen in hot pursuit, God delivered the Hebrews across the Red Sea and onto dry land. For comfortable travel Miriam chose a loose-fitting garment that also turned out to be perfect for dancing! In a burst of thankfulness, she led the women in song and dance. She's now the first female singer on record!

Now, **Deborah**. In a land where most of the power was held by men, this woman's faith carried the Israelites forward unafraid. Like judges everywhere she was forced to make difficult decisions. So folks, "Here comes the judge! Here comes the judge!"

Delilah here is obviously beautiful, but she's also fiercely independent, determined to make her way in the world without a man controlling her! The hidden pockets in her dress allow her easy access to her tools and payments.

Ruth, a dedicated daughter-in-law to Naomi, a sturdy hiker, and a strong harvester, is wearing a lovely cape that easily becomes a sleeping bag. Useful for protection from the inclement weather, this versatile outfit rolls out so one can snuggle down in it at the foot of a bed or on the floor. Two items in one! A must for the thrifty but classic woman!

Like Sarah before her, **Hannah** grieved because she was childless. She prayed to the LORD, "If you will give me a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life and no razor shall touch his head." Samuel was born to Hannah and she gave him to Eli, the priest in the tabernacle. Each year, she would sew a new coat and bring it to him.

Oh, the **Woman of Endor**! The road to Endor is the oldest road and craziest road of all. Straight it runs to the witch's abode, as it did in the days of Saul. In her magic, she broke laws set down for the people of Israel. The day after King Saul visited her, he was beheaded by the Philistines. Let this be a lesson to you today—beware of visiting the Woman of Endor, lest you lose your head.



Like **Bathsheba**, you will be a smash at any waterside event in this attractive swimsuit. For bathing or sunning, wearing this garment, you'll dazzle even kings! And it has enough stretch for your early trimesters, should you find yourself expecting! A lovely cover-up is available to shield you if your next pool party is rooftop!

Esther has stars in her eyes, love and courage in her heart and a crown on her head. She graciously accepts kudos from her people for a triumphant deliverance from a massacre. She's wearing a Mordecai design. You can find this piece in Empire Ltd. shops throughout the land.

Mary, who is with child, wears this serviceable but stylish garment for her journey with Joseph to Bethlehem. Suitable for riding or walking, this durable maternity outfit sheds dust and keeps the wearer warm. A must for mothers-to-be during the Advent season or for those chilly summer evenings in the mountains. Sold exclusively at Star in the East market centers.

You've likely seen **Anna** in the temple and heard her praying and thanking God. To ward off the dampness and chill of the temple, Anna wears a shawl. Notice the beautiful stitchery and the lovely the drape of the fabric. It's an essential for anyone sitting inside a chilly temple with its rugged stone walls, awaiting the arrival of the Lord in, day in and day out.

Here is the beautiful **Salome**, ready to dance at the birthday celebration of King Herod, coached by her mother, Herodias. Her dancewear will allow her to enchant King Herod and the entire court. Your wish, too, can come true in this alluring costume. All heads will turn your way. Careful though—don't lose yours!

For **Martha**, there's always work to be done! If you need to do some cooking, cleaning or tidying, consider these comfortable clothes and essential tools! On the day that Martha prepared a lavish meal for Jesus, he was more interested in food for the soul than food for the body. Our Martha at least had the right attire and



supplies for the work she did to welcome Jesus!

Mary Magdalene shows us that the best accessory is self-worth. Seen and beloved by Jesus, Mary Magdalene knows her true worth is as a child of God. Her simple, classic attire lets her inner beauty shine forth! And the timeless black attire is perfect for day or night, work or worship!

Eunice, like her mother before her, was a teacher of the Word. Here, she sports a smart smock with large pockets to hold stone tablets, parchment, paper—whatever is available! Her ever-at-the-ready scriptures are also accommodated by her roomy pocketed smock. This handy little number comes in pink, light blue and lush lavender.

Dorcus (you may know her as Tabitha) is a good woman, a believer in Christ, and, like her Lord, loves the poor and is eager to serve. Her life can be given in eight words: "devoted to good



works and acts of charity." We can be sure her nimble fingers have made clothing for those in need—prayer shawls to comfort those who need healing, baby items to welcome newborns, and so much more.

Priscilla, first convert (along with her spouse Aquila), is a weaver, tentmaker, missionary and instructor of the word. She is wearing a lovely traveling suit. Perfect for the missionary on the go, this nonwrinkle fabric and simple lines are all the rage this season in Corinth and Athens. Sailing to Rome is a breeze in this charming apparel!

And last in our fashion parade comes **Lydia**, the savvy businesswoman you may know as "Our Lady of the Lavenders." An inspiration for us all, she welcomed God into her life and set an example for her family. Despite being a hardworking merchant, this faithful woman supports God's work in all the ways that she can! 🌸

Note

*The Women's Bible Commentary, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992); 2003–2004 PW/Horizons Bible study, *The Face Is Familiar: Remembering Unnamed Women in Scripture* by Louise, Mary and Sue Westfall; and the 2004–2005 PW/Horizons Bible study *What She Said: Quotable Women in Scripture* by Dale Lindsay Morgan



Special thanks to Myra Cook and Presbyterian Women at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi, for providing the individual portrait photos of their Biblical Women Fashion show, and to Susan Leiber and Presbyterian Women of First United Presbyterian Church of DePere, Wisconsin (left), for photos of their fashion show.