

Timeless Tales for Daring Girls

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INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, when I was little, my favorite moments were when my mom read stories to me from the Bible. I would snuggle up close, eager to hear about the adventures of heroes like Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul. But as I listened, I couldn't help but wonder, where were the stories about brave women?

As I grew older and went to school to learn more about the Bible, I discovered something extraordinary — there were stories of daring women with courage and wisdom in the Bible! I was excited to share them with my own children, Charlotte and Mike. But when I read children's Bible storybooks, I couldn't find these strong, fearless women. Why weren't they included?

I love writing books about God and Jesus, so when my kids asked me to write a book for them, I was thrilled. I started writing a children's Bible storybook but never finished. Time passed, and my little girl grew up. She now has children of her own, Lily and William. And there still isn't a book with all the women from the Bible I want to share with them.

One day, Lily asked a question that made me think. She wanted to know if there are daring women today like the ones I told her about in the Bible. That's when I decided to add the exciting stories of girls and women from all faiths who have lived in more recent times.

As I paired each woman with her biblical sister, I realized God had put the same divine spark within them! A spark that shone brightly in their time and connected these two women across the centuries. That spark is within the women in this book, and guess what? That spark is within you, too.

What are your divine sparks? They're there, just waiting for you to find them, and I think that's pretty exciting.

I could hardly wait to start writing again, with all the love of a mom and now a MomMom (that's what my grandchildren call me.) So, as you sit with your mom, dad, or someone who loves you, get ready to meet brave,

wise women from the Bible and the fantastic women of all faiths who came after them. I hope you'll love them as much as I do.

And remember, like these women, you can be brave and daring and kind and caring, too. Enjoy your journey and sparkle on!

Elizabeth Bradley Rankin

Charlotte & Mike's Mom
Lily & William's MomMom



Queen Vashti Says, “No Way”

Once upon a time, Queen Vashti, a daring woman known for her beauty, married a king who enjoyed giving fancy parties. His parties lasted several days and were filled with wine, music, dancing, and delicious food served on gold platters.

One day, the king wanted everyone to admire his beautiful wife during a big celebration. He sent seven men to bring Queen Vashti to his party. He planned to place a sparkling crown on her head.

In addition to her beauty, Queen Vashti was also intelligent and brave. She knew true worth went beyond appearance. So, she made a daring choice. She disobeyed the king’s command because he only valued her looks, and she felt insulted.

When Queen Vashti lived, husbands told their wives what to do, and the wives were expected to obey them. But when the messengers asked Queen Vashti to come with them, she planted her feet firmly on the ground and said, “No way.” Her Divine Spark of Assertiveness was with her, just when she needed it.

All the men in the kingdom began to worry. “What if our wives behave like Queen Vashti and refuse to obey us?” So, they pleaded with the king to make a new law.

To punish Queen Vashti, the king would no longer see her. But the queen knew she had made the right decision, even though it came at a great cost. Queen Vashti’s courage became an example for others to follow.

Today, many women no longer promise to obey their husbands when they get married, and guess who paved the way? Queen Vashti!



Read about Queen Vashti in Esther 1:10-22

Dear God, help me understand how valuable I am.

DARING WOMEN TODAY:

Claudette Colvin

In 1955, not so very long ago, fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin stood up for her rights and said, “No way,” much like Queen Vashti. One day Claudette hopped on a bus to head home from school. At that time, white and black students weren’t allowed to attend the same schools due to segregation. Segregation is when people are kept apart because of the color of their skin.

Black people also didn’t have the same rights as white people. Black people were told to sit in the back of the bus and were not allowed inside certain motels and restaurants. Claudette felt angry about this unfair treatment.

That afternoon, she decided to take action on her bus ride home. The white section in front quickly filled up, leaving a white woman with nowhere to sit. The bus driver ordered the black students to give up their seats – three did, but Claudette did not. Glowing with the Divine Spark of Assertiveness, she stood her ground.

One of the white riders angrily shouted at her, “You’ve got to get up!” But Claudette refused to move. She later shared her feelings with a magazine reporter. “I felt like Sojourner Truth was pushing down on one shoulder and Harriet Tubman was pushing down on the other – saying, ‘Sit down girl!’ I was glued to my seat.” Sojourner and Harriet were enslaved women who had successfully fought for their freedom over 100 years before.

Two policemen quickly boarded the bus and took Claudette away. Due to her young age, she didn’t challenge the segregation laws in Alabama. But her story helped in an important case that led to the desegregation of Montgomery, Alabama buses so that no person was forced to ride in the back.

Remember Claudette and Vashti, two brave women who stood up for their rights and sparkle on!

Born September 5, 1939
United States of America



Sparkle Time!

Remember playing in the sandbox when you were little, and someone grabbed your favorite toy? You may have grabbed it back and said, “No way!” Sharing and giving are important lessons to learn as we grow up and become older. But so is learning to speak up and say what we’re thinking and feeling. Claudette and Vashti spoke up for themselves and their rights. It’s not always easy – in fact, it can be hard and scary – but the truth is, it’s worth it. You can do it!

**“We’d been studying the Constitution... I knew I had rights.”
– Claudette Colvin**

Mary of Bethany Shakes Things Up

Long ago, when Jesus lived, people were taught that girls weren't as important as boys. Girls weren't supposed to do awesome things like Miriam, who helped lead people to freedom. They couldn't lead an army like Deborah or rule a kingdom like the Queen of Sheba.

Those women were great leaders, but over time some people from the country of Greece convinced the men in Israel that women shouldn't be strong and wise anymore. Girls couldn't even go to school or learn about God. They were told to care for kids, cook meals, and spin wool.

But Jesus had another idea. He believed women and girls should have the chance to learn.

One rainy afternoon, Jesus went to a village where a kind woman named Martha invited him into her cozy home. The kitchen smelled delicious as she cooked. Martha's sister Mary didn't want to stay in the kitchen with her, though. Instead, Mary boldly walked into the front room and sat at Jesus' feet to listen to him teach. Glowing with the Divine Spark of Empowerment, Mary dared to learn from Jesus, just like the men.

Mary's sister, Martha, didn't like this, so she pleaded with Jesus. "Don't you see my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Please, tell her to help me." Jesus answered gently, "Martha, Martha, you're too busy. Come take a break and sit here with Mary. She's learning from me, as she should."

With a warm smile, Jesus welcomed Martha's sister, Mary, and praised her courage. Martha and all the men who heard this were surprised. But Jesus treated everyone the same and never changed his mind.

Jesus shows us that girls should be treated with respect and allowed to learn, just like everyone else. Now that's what I call good news!



Read about Mary of Bethany in Luke 10:38-42

Dear God, thank you for the chance to sit and listen and learn from you.

DARING WOMEN TODAY:

Ellen Ochoa

Have you ever dreamed of flying to space? Ellen Ochoa did, and she became the first Latina woman in space. She spent nine days in a space shuttle called Discovery, floating 200 miles above the Earth.

Like Mary of Bethany, Ellen loved to learn. She even went on a mission to study something important called the earth's ozone layer. The ozone layer, over six miles up in space, acts like a giant shield, protecting life on our planet. Ellen is an intelligent scientist who understands this amazing layer and cares about our world.

"It isn't just about experiencing space," Ellen said. "We're up there for a purpose. We have people counting on us. We need to help keep our planet safe."

Ellen loves learning so much that she earned a doctorate from Stanford University in California. Beaming with the Divine Spark of Empowerment within her, she worked hard to reach her goal of going to space.

And she made it, not just once but four times. Ellen spent over one thousand hours floating in space. She even played the flute inside the spaceship. After doing important experiments, she played music while floating weightlessly inside the spacecraft!

People think Ellen is such a hero that six schools have been named after her. The Ochoa Middle School in Washington has a flag with a rocket on it. Ellen took the flag to space with her and returned it to the school after her mission. You can still see that flag there today.

Ellen is in the International Air and Space Hall of Fame. When she's not living in the spacecraft, she's with her husband and two sons. Imagine having a mom so cool that a cartoon was produced about her. Ellen's adventures were featured on television in the cartoon Ready Jet Go.

When you're ready to dream big and explore the universe, remember daring Ellen Ochoa, who helped lead the way into space.

Born May 10, 1958
United States of America



Sparkle Time!

The Divine Spark of Empowerment is a funny gift. Yep! Funny. Why is it funny, you ask? Well, you see, it's a gift given to all girls and boys, but not everyone accepts it. That's right. It's waiting just outside your door, wrapped in shiny paper with a beautiful bow on top. But only you can unwrap it. You have to claim the power God has given you – the power to believe in yourself, the power to help a friend, the power to reach for the stars like Ellen Ochoa.

**"Don't be afraid to reach for the stars."
- Ellen Ochoa**

Junia Becomes an Apostle

Once upon a time, a brave woman named Junia lived in Italy after traveling there by boat. Like Phoebe, Junia worked with Paul the apostle, a faithful follower of Jesus who traveled to many places sharing the message of Jesus.

Junia's dedication, commitment, and bravery shone brightly wherever she went. She began her daring adventure to Italy with Paul and their friend in a small wooden boat. They sailed through rough waters that almost sank them, but miraculously, they arrived safely.

One day, these three friends were busy telling people about the astounding things Jesus had done. They told them he had come back to life after being dead for three days. Unfortunately, the local rulers thought they were dangerous and locked them in a dark, dirty jail.

But Junia never felt scared. She willingly went to jail because she had faith in Jesus. After they were set free, Paul introduced Junia to other believers in Rome, an important city in Italy where the Christian faith grew and quickly spread.

But there's something else outstanding about Junia. Apostles were loyal friends and followers of Jesus. Many people believe only the twelve men Jesus chose to follow him were apostles in the Bible. But Paul recognized the Divine Spark of Integrity in Junia and named her an apostle, too.

What an amazing honor Junia received for herself and for girls everywhere. She overcame every problem and bravely shared the story of Jesus with everyone she met.



Read about Junia in Romans 1:1, 7, 16:7

**Dear God, help me know that with your help,
I can overcome problems, too.**

DARING WOMEN TODAY:

Sister Jane Mankaa

Jane Mankaa loved Jesus with all her heart. She prayed to him every day and followed his teachings. Jane grew up in Cameroon, West Africa, where life could be hard. As a child, she lived in a small house with dirt floors and slept on banana leaves with her three sisters and brothers.

At sixteen, Jane became a nun and was then called Sister Jane. One afternoon, she saw something that made her sad. There were many kids in Cameroon whose parents died from a disease called AIDS. These kids became orphans. They didn't have a mom or dad or anyone to care for them, and they didn't have a place to live or food to eat.

Loving Sister Jane knew she had to help them. She opened a home filled with love called Good Shepherd Orphanage. She cared for over 100 kids, gave them food, and showed them love. But like Junia, some people didn't appreciate her.

One time, a neighbor tried to poison Sister Jane. Then, men with guns broke into the home and tried to take money. Instead of being afraid, daring Sister Jane prayed for them, and they left without hurting anyone.

Sister Jane kept being brave and following Jesus. With the Divine Spark of Integrity in her soul, she wanted her children to have a promising future, so she worked with a priest (me!) in America. Together, we raised money to build a school for the kids called Good Shepherd Academy.

Sister Jane didn't give up even during a war in her country. One day, she ran with the children and hid outside the school wall to protect them from soldiers. When it was safe, she carefully led the children back inside.

Sister Jane Mankaa followed Jesus every day of her life and always helped others. She shows us how to be faithful and brave, especially during difficult times.

1960 – 2021

Cameroon, West Africa



Sparkle Time!

We've come to our last Sparkle Time together, and I've saved the best for last — just for you! You know, the Divine Spark of Integrity is a funny thing. God gives it to all of us, but too many people don't want it. To have integrity means you tell the truth — all the time.

It means you can be trusted and depended on — all the time. It means you're accountable for your actions — all the time. The Divine Spark of Integrity! It can change you and it can change the world. Sparkle on, my friend, sparkle on!

“Love is such a powerful instrument to make people feel at home.” – Sister Jane Mankaa