

*The
Greatest
Women's
Liberator
Jesus*

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Introduction

So why did I write this book?

I am no theologian. In fact, far from it! And the Lord knows we don't need ANOTHER book on feminism or defense of woman's rights in leadership in the church or workplace.

As a pastor and leader trying to lead a church community through a pandemic, eruptions of war on our borders, and various other "shakings" of governmental systems and infrastructures worldwide, I believe that the last thing the church needs right now is another issue to divide and segregate us! The enemy is using anything and everything in his grasp to try to mutilate the bride of Christ, turning against each other through theological doctrines, discrimination, and other sometimes very trivial issues.

With everything inside of me, I am against this same scheme that originates from the pit of hell!

I have written this book out of obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit in a feeble attempt to simply address, in my own way, a very complex issue that has plagued the church for far too long. In a day and age where time is of the essence, I believe that we need to get back to the main thing of partnering with God to push back the kingdom of darkness and prioritize what is in the heart of our Father, which is people, people, people!

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The good news of the gospel being preached throughout all the earth and the lost coming back home being restored to their true identity in God as His children.

The salvation of souls is what's on our Father's heart day and night, night and day, and it should be what makes our hearts beat too!

If ever there was a time where we needed "all hands on deck," every person enlisted in this tremendous end-time war battling for the eternal souls of mankind it is now.

It is for that reason that I am writing this book. We need to stop fighting each other, stop the friendly fire and futile in-house wars and get all players focused and, more importantly, onto the field!

I am specifically referring to women whom today make up more than 60% of every church demographic in this book. Women need to be restored to their rightful place in relation to God's calling upon their lives in every tier of society but especially in the church! Not because I (a nobody) say so, but because this is what Jesus said through His word and His actions! It was a priority to Him to liberate women from the curse of "man ruling over her," according to Genesis 2.

Not only that, but Jesus works throughout His ministry to bring healing and restoration to her gender so that she can be FREE to operate in the calling and purpose God has for her life!

This book will walk you through this process as we examine some very significant encounters that Jesus had with women.

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My prayer is two-fold.

Firstly, women who read this book would experience, through the power of the Holy Spirit, deep restoration of their gender to their true identity as daughters of the living God—created in His image, equal to man to fulfill the purpose and plan God has for them on this earth.

And for men who read this book, I pray that they too would be redeemed from the curse of the “fall of mankind,” which has resulted in them not seeing woman the way God sees her. I pray that the greatest gift that God gave to man - a partner, companion, and co-laborer in the kingdom to accomplish the purposes of God would be reactivated!

My prayer is that the relationship between man and woman would be restored to its original intention and design. I pray that this book builds up and edifies the bride of Christ by helping put it back together where it belongs, member by member.

Together man and woman represent the fullness of God. I pray that we represent this well. The world is waiting for the sons and daughters of God to be revealed, to arise and take their rightful place. (Romans 8:19).

I pray that the Holy Spirit would do what only He can do as you read through the pages of this book.

May it bring blessing and encouragement to you personally and the church at large!



1.

Original design

This is the second book that I am writing about God's original intention and design for humankind. As a first-generation believer raised in a non-Christian home, there are many subjects that I personally needed understanding and clarity on regarding God's heart for us and how that looks practically to live out in our everyday lives.

My first book, "Original design," focuses primarily on our inner healing journey and clarifies in simple terms Christian principles in different areas of our lives that God calls us to implement if we are seeking His best for our lives.

Fast forward to 25 years later, after having accepted Christ as my personal Savior, I am now a leader and pastor with over 20 years of ministry experience. As I minister and serve the body of Christ (in the 21st century) in different parts of the world, I am constantly surprised at the level of resistance I encounter, not because I am a leader or a pastor but because I am a woman.

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Without a doubt, there is a strategically focused attack on the gender of womankind all over the world. As sad as this situation is, it should not come as a surprise, for God declared that there would be “enmity” (open hostility, animosity, deep-seated hatred) between a woman and the serpent.

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

However, before I get ahead of myself, let's go back to the beginning to understand better where all these gender wars and power struggles started. And even more importantly, let's jump right in and start answering the question of who are women really in relation to men? What is their God-given role in the church and society? Not according to public opinion or the strength of theological debates or obscure doctrine, but according to the Bible, you have in your home sitting on your bedside table.

To answer these pertinent questions, let's go on an exploration through scripture. Like most expeditions, the best place to start is going directly to the source, God Himself.

Both genders were created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness]; and let them have complete authority over the fish of

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the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps and crawls on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in His own image, the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them.

It's essential to understand that God's first introduction to Gender is in line with the first introduction of the Trinity of GOD. God is three people in one, namely Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is implied that each personhood of God is different but of equal importance. It is implied that all persons need to be present for God to be represented in His fullness. God is essentially a team, and we were created in that image!

The Greek word “man” includes both the male and female gender.

The creation of Eve as a “Helper.”

¹⁵ So the Lord God took the man [He had made] and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but [only] from the tree of the knowledge (recognition) of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise on the day that you eat from it, you shall most certainly die [because of your disobedience].”_

¹⁸ Now, the Lord God said, “It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable and complementary for him.”_²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²² And the rib which the Lord God had

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taken from the man He made (fashioned, formed) into a woman, and He brought her and presented her to the man. ²³ Then Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones,

And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed or embarrassed.

In the past, and sometimes still presently people have had a poor understanding of the word "helper," which is used in reference to the first woman Eve when she was created. Some people think that the word means that the first woman, and currently all women , were created by God to be nothing more than personal assistants, to men whose roles are limited to taking care of the family, household chores and attending to the needs and even her husband and children.

However this word "help" has a much broader range of connotations in English. "Help" can refer to a simple, modest act or something much more important. An example of this curcial help is the assistance provided by doctors. In Hebrew, the word for "helper" used in Genesis 2 is *ezer*, and it is always and only used in the Old Testament in the context of important and acts of God to rescue and support his people.

The noun *Ezer* is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Twice it is used in the context of the first woman. Other times it is used for people helping (or failing to assist) in life-threatening

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situations. Sixteen times it is used in reference to God as a helper to his people. Without exception, these biblical texts discuss a vital, powerful kind of help. However when *ezer* is applied to the first woman, its meaning is usually limited and watered down to fit with traditional and cultural views of women's roles.

Ezer describes aspects of God's character: He is our refuge and strength, our rescuer, our protector, and our help in times of trouble! And *Ezer* is the word God used to describe Eve. Eve is someone who would give vital strength and support to Adam.

Ezer kenegdo, which means "a helper suitable for him," refers to the first woman without any narrow qualifications, prescribed limits, or cultural restrictions. And it is not specified anywhere in Genesis 2 how the first woman was to express and apply her help towards her husband.

Unfortunately, too many people have incorrectly assumed that the woman's role was to be subservient and less critical. These people have read Genesis with the limited narrow mindset and have failed to see the beautiful expressions of equality and unity in this passage of scripture.

The primary purpose of the Creation of Eve is to emphasize the unity and mutuality of man and woman. To read it any other way is to miss the point and distort its meaning and original purpose. The first woman Eve was "taken out" of the side of the first human being Adam. Before her creation, Eve was already a part of Adam in some way. When Adam looked at his new partner, he declared

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that she was “flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone!” This is a profound expression of similarity and equality. There is no hierarchy implied here. But to further highlight the point, verse 24 says that when a husband and wife join in marriage, they become one flesh, which Jesus also emphasizes. God’s ideal at creation was that man and woman be completely equal and rule over nature (and not each other) together.

Interestingly, God makes Adam with dust, independently and from nothing. God indeed could have chosen to create Eve in this same way, but He did not. Instead, God takes something (a bone, a rib, flesh) FROM Adam in order to create Eve. _

This had made me wonder if there is something “missing” from Adam that is different from before he underwent this surgery. Is there something “missing” from many leadership teams or churches today?

Could that missing element be Eve?

Could it be that Together we represent the fullness of the image of God?

The order of creation is not in order of importance.

This might be stating the obvious, but I will say it anyway for simple-minded people like myself. God did not create creation in order of importance. If this were the case, that would mean that the fish or animals are more significant than humankind created afterward.

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Instead, the supreme architect of the universe creates according to both infinite wisdom and optimal design.

Just like a builder first lays the foundation, then builds the walls, the roof, and lastly the finishings such as electricity, windows, etc.

I am sure you can agree that the roof is just as important as the walls; however, just as both are needed and vital components of the house, there is still an order of creation that will ensure the long-term stability of the structure.

Through the scriptures, we see God approaching the creation of the world and mankind in the same way that a father prepares for the arrival of his beloved newborn baby. He prepares the nursery with beautiful colored painted walls and decor and adds all the furniture and finishings. There is excitement, anticipation, and preparation before the baby is born!

We see this transpiring in the book of Genesis as God takes 5 days to prepare the dwelling place of His greatest masterpiece - Humankind.

It might seem like an unimportant detail; however, it is significant to understand that woman was not created as an "afterthought" or because none of the animals was found to be a suitable companion to Adam.

While nobody has ever said these words to me directly, as a woman, I was born feeling this indirect, silent accusation towards my gender. "You are second best, less than man," "You are the

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backup plan because there was nobody better." "God thought of you later, You almost were not even created," and one of the best lies yet, "You were created FOR Adam / man, to fulfill His purpose God gave him. "Without a man, your life is pointless."

Women, if you have ever thought or felt these words, know that you are not alone. But more importantly, know that they are lies constructed in the pit of hell!

While it is true that God first created Adam and then Eve, we need to completely grasp the concept that God had intended to create both a man and a woman BEFORE He created Adam. We see this in Genesis 1:2, where He says He will create man (both male and female) in His image.

God had it in His mind and heart to create two people that would represent the fullness of God - male and female. This was ALWAYS part of the plan. Not just before Adam was created but before God spoke the words "Let there be light."

I have personally always wondered why God did not just create Eve the same time that He created Adam. While things might have been simpler theologically, I believe that in God's divine great wisdom as the one who sees time from the beginning to the end, He saw into the future that "Adam" would need assistance in the revelation that he needs a companion. And that nothing else is suitable in this world, in all of creation, except the one that God would prepare and carefully carve out from his side.

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God informs him that it is not good for man to be alone and then takes Adam on a journey whereby Adam takes time going through all the animals to see if there is one that can work alongside him in completing his God-given assignment. God knew that what Adam searched for through all animal kingdoms, he would not find. God knew this all along, but still, He waited for Adam to come to this divine revelation himself. (Genesis 2:20).

Two thousand twenty years later, some things have not changed as God patiently waits beside Adam / men for them to remember this revolutionary truth that the provision for the completion of the assignment God gave mankind to fulfill has been provided for by the creation from his side - woman.

Reflection

What stands out to me through this first chapter of God's original design?

What was my definition of the term "Helper" before reading this?
Do I need to reconsider my definition for this term?

Have I felt any of these silent accusations towards my gender?

If so, pray into this and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into a greater level of truth.



2.

What went wrong?

Have you often wondered when did it all go wrong? Where did the battle of the sexes originate? If God's original design for humankind involved a world without pain, boredom, strife, sickness, tragedy, or anything bad whatsoever how did we end up in a broken world that we see around us every day?

The Fall of mankind

Genesis 2:7-17

⁷ Then the Lord God formed that is, created man's body from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being, an individual complete in body and spirit. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden (oasis) in the east, in Eden (delight, land of happiness); and He put the man whom He had formed (created) there. ⁹ And in that garden the Lord God caused to grow from the ground every tree that is desirable and pleasing to the sight and good (suitable, pleasant) for food; the tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of

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the experiential knowledge (recognition) of the difference between good and evil. ¹⁰ Now, a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there, it divided and became four branching rivers. ¹¹ The first river is named Pishon; it flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² The gold of that land is good; bdellium (a fragrant, valuable resin) and the onyx stone are found there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the entire land of Cush in Mesopotamia. ¹⁴ The third river is named Hiddekel (Tigris); it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ So the Lord God took the man He had made and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely (unconditionally) eat the fruit from every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but only from the tree of the knowledge (recognition) of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise on the day that you eat from it, you shall most certainly die because of your disobedience."

God instructed Adam not to eat from the tree BEFORE Eve was created.

Wait, what?! Stop the clock! Let's rewind this statement until you catch the complete revelation of this! In-person, God gave the instruction directly to Adam not to eat the fruit before Eve was created! Nowhere in scripture does it say that then God told Eve the same after she was created. It is therefore implied that Eve received this information second-hand via Adam.

This seemingly simple revelatory truth changed my life!

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As a married woman for over 20 years now, I understand the difficulty and frustration of working with second-hand information. I remember my days as a young mother when I intentionally chose to take a back seat in ministry and work. We had three small children, all in close proximity, and I remember that beautiful season of being present to my children and making them my priority while my husband served in full-time ministry. My Sunday morning worship services were exchanged for children's ministry toddler classes. Even though I served as an elder and part of the pastoral team, I missed many eldership and pastoral meetings, ministry events, and conferences. Although this time was rich, fulfilling, and where I was supposed to be, I remember having to work through the frustration of receiving information indirectly via my husband.

Oh, how grueling those times were when I would ask him to relay what happened at the eldership meeting, and he would summarize a three-hour meeting into a three-minute recap. In all fairness to him, he did learn some skills and became better at his summaries over the years, but it was never the same! I would often still have to prod for essential details of the meetings to understand better what occurred. I remember asking questions like, "What were the exact words he used?" "What tone was used?" "What was the feeling in the room?" "The facial expressions of the others," "who said what first?" etc.

I remember the distinct feeling that I didn't quite understand the whole picture behind some decisions being taken simply because I was not in the room.

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I acknowledged that some information was missing which could not be transferred through a verbal report back, no matter how hard my husband tried.

You see, I wasn't just looking for the black and white facts. As a woman, I wanted to understand the bigger picture and the heart and intention in what was being said. Why did they say that? What is the underlying motive? For a woman, understanding needs to incorporate knowledge and emotion, intuition, and intention. This is the way God created us.

Coming back to our story of creation after learning this essential fact that "we as women" were not standing next to Adam when he received this instruction makes all the difference. The simple truth is that we are more vulnerable to deception. To second-guessing what God said because it had come through a second-hand source. A source that had already begun to alter the exact words that God used. God said, do not eat from the fruit; however, Adam said to Eve do not touch the fruit. It was small but significant in that there was already a broken telephone of communication between them.

To prove that this is sound theologically, we see that God does not cause the consequence to kick in when Eve eats the fruit because He did not give the instruction to her. He gave it directly, personally, face to face to Adam.

There was room for doubt with Eve, which is why the Bible refers to Eve's encounter with the snake as "her being deceived." However, with Adam, it is different as this was direct disobedience.

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There was no room for doubt in Adam's case. He chose to disobey a direct command that came from the warm breath of God's mouth.

This is why the consequences of the fall, their eyes becoming open, happen only after Adam eats the fruit Eve offered him.

The original sin

Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty (subtle, skilled in deceit) than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made. And the serpent (Satan) said to the woman, "Can it really be that God has said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden,³ except the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God said, 'You shall not eat from it nor touch it. Otherwise, you will die.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You certainly will not die!⁵ For God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, you will have greater awareness, and you will be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil."⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired to make one wise and insightful, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of the two of them were opened. Their awareness increased, and they knew that they were naked, and they fastened fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Eve was working on second-hand information. This is significant.

Although there is still a question of whether she would have been deceived if she had been told by God directly, I want to propose

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that the original sin was not about disobeying a direct order but instead was a question of doubting her identity.

Did God really say that you would be like him? She was already like God, created in His image.

The original sin was that when Eve was addressed this question, she did not go back to God to ask "who am I?" to confirm her identity.

That is still the same sin we struggle with today. Women all over the world are still questioning who they are from their husbands, earthly fathers, pastors, and male leaders.

Womenkind, I want to say this to you...just go to your Dad!

It is your right as His heir. He is waiting for you, calling you.

He longs to be the only one to answer this longing of your soul.

Consequences of the fall

Genesis 3:8-16

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool [afternoon breeze](#) of the day, so the man and his wife hid and kept themselves hidden from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of You [walking](#) in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." ¹¹ God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten [fruit](#) from the tree of which I

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commanded you not to eat?" ¹² And the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled and deceived me, and I ate from the forbidden tree."

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all the cattle, And more than any animal of the field; On your belly, you shall go, And dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

¹⁵ "And I will put enmity (open hostility) between you and the woman, and between your seed (offspring) and her Seed; He shall fatally bruise your head, and you shall only bruise His heel."

Consequences for Eve

¹⁶To the woman, He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth; In pain, you will give birth to children; Yet your desire and longing will be for your husband, And he will rule with authority over you and be responsible for you."

Besides the sin of the consequences of pain in childbirth, this was the origin of the conflict between genders!

It was prophesied that we would desire affirmation, love, respect, to be seen, be treated equally, called out, and valued by man.

And instead, he will rule OVER US.

He will not see us as equal, see the value we bring to the table, or see us as the vital missing component of the team. A modern-day

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version of this curse could be interpreted as men will see you as being inferior, weak, or less important. They will be blinded to the gifts, talents that God has equipped you with, which you to bring to the team, and the missing element in making your God-given mission and assignment a success!

The Hebrew word for “rule” is *mashal*, which means “to have dominion.” We need to realize that before the curse, husbands and wives were commissioned to co-reign and co-lead together (see Genesis 1:27–28). It was only after the curse that husbands were given dominion over their wives.

Consequences for Adam

Genesis 3:17-19

17 Then to Adam, the Lord God said, “Because you have listened attentively to the voice of your wife, and have eaten fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it;

The ground is now under a curse because of you; In sorrow and toil, you shall eat its fruit all the days of your life. 18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 “By the sweat of your face You will eat bread Until you return to the ground, For from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust, you shall return.”

Adam goes from seeing Eve too much to not seeing her at all. From giving her too much influence, weight, and authority in his life (over Gods) to none at all. The ball swings from one extreme to another.

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The issue for Adam was that although he heard from God directly (where there was no question or room for confusion), he still chose to follow the voice of Eve above what he inherently knew to be right. In fact, he was so sure of this command from God that he added an additional requirement of not touching the fruit! (Which God did not stipulate originally).

Therefore, the consequences for Adam are more severe and are related to the entire population, both men and women. The consequences of the fall are:

Sorrow, dissatisfaction with work

Lack of provision

Work becoming hard and a curse instead of a blessing

Physical death

Overcoming The curse for men - Not seeing her!

Ruling over women and oppressing them, believing that she is less than others. Less important, less anointed, less capable. Not seeing her the way God sees her. Not calling her out and not affirming her identity as an equal co-heirs of God. This is all part of the curse and the consequence of sin, not God's original design.

If you think about it seriously, mankind by far received the greater punishment because firstly, as a man, you just lost half your team, half your strength.

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Deuteronomy 32:30 says that "one can put a thousand to flee but two of us ten thousand."

Secondly, not only have you lost your greatest ally and partner, but your workload has doubled. What was once easy and natural became hard work. It also became less enjoyable!

The good news is that Jesus came to redeem us from every curse for both genders, including the curse of the Fall.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the law's curse by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

I want to encourage you, especially mankind (brothers in the faith), to take an honest and fresh new look at your fundamental underlying beliefs on this subject of woman's purpose and role in relation to man.

It is time for women and men to receive the full benefit of the redemptive act of our Savior's death on Calvary's cross. After all, Jesus died to provide us with abundant life and everlasting joy. It is high time that both women and men are empowered to reach their full potential in Christ.

Reflection

MANKIND

Am I open to the possibility that I could have a blindspot with how I view a woman's role concerning the curse after the fall?

How sure am I that I see womankind in the same light that God sees her?

Pray into this.

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WOMANKIND

Reflecting on my own life, can I see the effects this curse has had on my internal thoughts and emotions concerning this scripture “your desire and longing will be for your husband (man), And he will rule [with authority](#) over you and be responsible for you.”

Pray into this.



3.

Jesus - the great freedom fighter

I often say that if Jesus only came to die on the cross for our sins for the salvation of our eternal souls, that would have been enough!

He made way for us to be restored in a perfect relationship with our Father God. He could have “dropped the mic” there, and it would still be the most remarkable and most significant event in history!

But the reality is that He did not stop there. He did not just die for our “still to come future” in Heaven one day.

Instead, His going to the cross not only released eternal salvation, which we will one day experience when He returns, but the cross also releases immediate changes in our current, everyday, present reality!

He died so that we can start experiencing “heaven on earth” with the kingdom of God breaking through NOW in our current lives.

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This includes physical healing and inner healing, which is the healing of our soul and spirit, which includes our mind and emotions.

It also includes deliverance from demonic spirits and lies and wrong mindsets and addictions.

He came to set our bodies free from sickness and infirmity.

He came to set our souls free from emotional pain, trauma, and unforgiveness.

He came to set our spirit free from demonic oppression, bondage, and curses.

We see evidence of this right throughout His ministry as He implements this personally and actively trains and releases others to do the same!

There is something else I want to add to that list.

Jesus came to liberate women, not just a few recorded individually in scripture, but all womankind.

He came to set our gender free from the curse of longing and desiring the approval of man (instead of God) and coming under oppression by men.

Women saw Jesus as their deliverer from cultural oppression, their liberator from religious bondage, and their knight in shining armor. He came to deliver the oppressed and to set the captives free.

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Women loved Him because He valued them, protected them, and taught them. He treated women as equals and refused to bow down to the male-dominated society that had ruled the Jewish world for centuries. Jesus' ministry was full of opportunities to redeem and restore women to their position in society and church.

According to theologians

Jesus encounters with a women

According to the New Testament, the Gospels contain many references to women. According to biblical scholars, there are not any recorded instances where Jesus disgraces, belittles, reproaches, or stereotypes a woman. They claim that examples of the manner of Jesus are instructive for inferring His attitudes toward women and repeatedly show how He liberated, acknowledged and affirmed women throughout his ministry. Of all founders of religions sects, Jesus stands alone as the one who did not discriminate against women. Byword or deed, he never encouraged the disparagement of a woman. Based on account of Jesus' interaction with a woman in Mark 7:24-30 "an unnamed Gentile woman reveals to Jesus that the ministry of God is not limited to particular group of people, but instead belongs to all who have faith."

Women as disciples

The term "disciple" simply means to be a student taught by a teacher. In the four gospels which were written toward the end of the first century AD, they frequently mention Jesus speaking to

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women publicly and against the social norms of the society in that time. From the beginning, Jewish women disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, had accompanied Jesus during His ministry and supported Him financially out of their private means. There is also evidence in numerous New Testament passages that Jesus had disciples who were women. There is the reported time when Jesus' family appeared in this story and asked to speak with him. Jesus replied:

"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother."

In this passage of scripture Jesus could not correctly have gestured to a crowd of men and said, "Here are my brother, and sister, and mother." He could only have said that to a group of both men and women. Therefore, the disciples standing before Him were a group composed of both men and women.

I hope you can understand how the fact that gospel writers even acknowledged and documented that Jesus taught women, befriended women, traveled with women, and ministered with women was a bold and countercultural statement. We will discover later in another chapter that when the disciples caught Jesus simply talking to the woman at the well, they were shocked. The gospels were written at least three decades after the Samaritan well incident, so their perspective on women had altered entirely by then. I used to think that when the gospel writers made statements

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like Jesus fed and taught five thousand men, plus women and children, they were degrading the women and children. But now I realize that the writers were trying to point out a radical dynamic taking place in the ministry of Jesus—He was teaching and thus equipping women and children and men. This was an extreme departure from Judaism, which frankly viewed women as too unintelligent to be prepared.

Jesus noticed women that were unnoticeable.

The bible also shows us that Jesus reaches out to "unnoticeable" women. These inconspicuous silent sufferers blend into the background and are seen by others as "unimportant citizens of the community." Jesus notices them, affirms their presence and "in one moment, He thrusts them on center stage in the drama of his redemption plan with the spotlights of eternity beaming down upon them. He immortalizes them in sacred history."

Women as models of Jesus' work

Another way we see Jesus acknowledging the importance of woman is during his teachings. The Parable of the Lost Coin and the Parable of the Leaven, Jesus uses a radical example (in his day) as he compares growth of the Kingdom of God to that of a woman and her household work. These parables follow the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and share the same revelations as their more male-oriented counterparts.

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Reflection

Pray and ask God if there is anything you still need to be set free from?

Personal notes and reflections.



4.

Womanhood, you are REDEEMED

JESUS encounters with women were radical, intentional, and deeply significant not only for these women but also for what they represent over our gender as womankind.

After the fall, God immediately prophesies a way to restore Eve! Through the birth of Jesus! The story that was cut short in the garden of Eve is continued here. The New Testament gospels are a continuation of the book of Genesis.

Luke 1:26-38

Jesus' Birth Foretold

²⁶ Now, in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy](#), the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, the angel said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly perplexed at what he said and kept carefully considering what kind of

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greeting this was. ³⁰ *The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.* ³¹ *Listen carefully: you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.* ³² *He will be great and eminent and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;* ³³ *and He will reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever, and of His kingdom, there shall be no end."* ³⁴ *Mary said to the angel, "How will this be since I am a virgin and have no intimacy with any man?"* ³⁵ *Then the angel replied to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you like a cloud; for that reason, the holy (pure, sinless) Child shall be called the Son of God.* ³⁶ *And listen, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.* ³⁷ *For with God nothing is or ever shall be impossible."* ³⁸ *Then Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."* And the angel left her.

The angel gives Mary the opportunity to redeem womankind through the birth of Christ.

As the old testament starts with the book of Genesis with the fall of the first Eve, then Adam, it foretells the story of the coming Messiah as a continuation of the story. Essentially Luke 1 is a continuation of the book of Genesis.

The story of the savior coming to redeem mankind is the most wonderful event in all of history and for all humanity.

However, it holds a special significance as we see God making way for womankind especially.

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We specifically see this in how God chooses to come to earth. Even though we can all agree that God did not need to “be born of a woman,” I believe that He specifically chose to do this to give womankind an opportunity for redemption.

Two angels - two opportunities

In just the same way that a fallen Angel (Lucifer in the form of a snake) came to present Eve with an opportunity to choose to disobey God by moving into doubt and deception instead of believing the word of the Lord; so God sets the stage again for a story re-write, an opportunity for Mary (womankind) to choose correctly.

I love this part of the story; it is so typical of His nature as a good Father to present his daughters with an opportunity to make right by giving us a precious gift - a second chance.

In this second part of this redemption of the womankind story, we see God sending another Angel, Gabriel, to present Mary with an opportunity to agree to bring forth the savior into the world!

In this story, it is essential to note that the Angel presents Mary with a CHOICE.

He announces that God has chosen her to carry the Messiah. He does not say that she is already pregnant with the Messiah. Instead, he reveals God's intentions, His offer, and awaits for something very significant and powerful. Her agreement!

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We need to understand that this was a choice; just like disobedience was a choice in the garden of Eden, so was Mary's decision to say Yes to God. He is indeed the ever true gentle lover who would never force Himself upon anyone. Instead, He gently and lovingly presents His plan and His heart, hoping that this time we make a better choice.

I believe that Mary took the time to consider the consequences of her decision before answering.

She realized fully that saying yes would mean most likely not continuing with her marriage to Joseph as she would have (correctly) assumed he would no longer be willing to do. It also meant she would have possibly been faced with scorn, shame, and rejection with a possibility of exile or even death from her family and community. The rumors would undoubtedly spread like wildfire that she was unfaithful and had a child out of wedlock. She knew that probably nobody would believe her version of the story and that although she would be pregnant with the Son of God, her life would be tough as she would have to live out the day to day realities of having a child out of wedlock because of this would probably close the door for any future marriage prospects or possibilities to lead a good and normal life in the future. The price could be high, and she would need to pay it, possibly even with her life. I believe she counted the cost, and despite it all, she chose to say YES!

When Mary said, " I am your servant; let it be done according to your word," she chose to say yes to obedience to God and His word.

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She decided to step into faith with complete surrender to God's will and purpose. What a great example of a take 2 scene from the garden of Eden. As she chose to partner with God and His purposes, she opened the door for redemption not only for all humanity but for our gender as women!

Only after her verbal agreement does the Holy Spirit overshadow her, and she becomes pregnant with Jesus!

Mary's story is the same story of Eve in the garden of Eden but with a very different result. Her story sets God's redemption plan in operation for all of womankind.

Revealing the Messiah

Not only was Mary responsible for the physical birth of Christ, but she factors in the birthing of His public ministry!

While it is not clear when God's original timeline was for Jesus to officially start His public ministry, we do know this. When He attended the wedding feast in Matthew, He claims that *"his time has not yet come."*

John 2:1-5

The first public miracle at Cana

¹ *On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; ²and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³When the wine was all gone, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no more wine." ⁴Jesus said to her, "[Dear](#) woman, what is that*

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to you and Me? My time [to act and to be revealed](#) has not yet come.”⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

I found this story both exciting and significant on so many levels.

Firstly, we see how Mary essentially seems to have altered the original timing of God's public ministry. She identified a need, saw a problem, and responded by her most natural instinct, which was to “pull forth” the revelation of Jesus! I personally loved this about Mary. She was not going to keep silent and passive when she knew that the solution, THE answer himself (to any situation), was sitting in their midst.

And secondly, I love how God responds in this story. Instead of reprimanding her or ignoring her request, He chooses to respond to her Faith and desire to make a difference in her situation by performing His first public miracle!

Womankind, this is a picture of who you are and, more importantly, how God sees you!

You are redeemed by the Lord, redeemed from the disgrace of sin and shame and redeemed from the gullibility of deception, doubt, and misunderstanding.

You are not the woman that said yes to the serpent; you are the woman that said YES to God! Yes, to partnering with God to bring forth His purposes into the earth and the Savior of this world!

And Yes, you are also the woman that reveals Christ's works to the world in times of lack, confusion, and darkness. You are the woman

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that chooses not to sit back idly and be silent when the world around you doesn't know what to do but instead to actively pull forth Jesus into any and every situation! He is the answer, and we will not be silent about whom we have in our midst!

In the following chapters, we will see how Jesus' specific encounters with different women are intentional and powerful, redeeming particular qualities of our gender, making Him the greatest liberator of women in all of history.

Reflection

How does this encounter of Christ bringing REDEMPTION to my gender apply to me?

In what areas specifically do I sense Him speaking redemption over my life?



5.

Womanhood, you are FORGIVEN

This is a significant biblical event for our gender as womankind. In this story when a woman is caught in the act of adultery, we see how Jesus calls both parties to account and implies that it's the same consequence for men and women. This was radical at this particular time in history and culture.

John 7:53–8:11

This story, beloved for its revelation of God's mercy toward sinners, is found only in John's Gospel. Jesus was teaching in the Temple in Jerusalem. Some scribes and Pharisees interrupted his teaching as they brought in a woman who had been taken in the very act of adultery. Their treatment of the woman is callous and demeaning. They stood her before him, declared the charge, reminded him of Moses' command that such women be stoned. More precisely, the law speaks of the man and the woman's death. [Lev. 20:10](#) [Deut. 22:22-24](#) We are left wondering why the man was not brought in with the woman.

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"What do you say?" they asked Jesus. If He contradicts the law, then He is condemned. But if He holds a strict line, He condones their ungodly treatment towards woman and will be held responsible by the Romans if the stoning proceeds. It seems that eitherway Jesus was trapped in this situation. After a time of silence and reflection, Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger. Although it was against the law to write even two letters on the sabbath, this was overlooked. The text gives no indication of what He wrote. It was clear that the woman's accusers were trying to entrap Jesus, not just the woman. To them, she was collateral damage to be used to "catch" Jesus on a theological, legal issue.

After a few moments, Jesus says to the accusers, "Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone." Then he goes down again and continues to write on the ground. In His response, Jesus did not condone adultery. Instead, he compels her accusers to judge themselves and find themselves guilty of this sin. The outcome was that none of them could pass the test, and they slipped out one by one, beginning with the eldest and probably wisest of the men.

When Jesus and the woman were alone, He asked her a simple question, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She replies, "No one, Lord." She becomes a memorable example that "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but to save the world according to John 3:17. Jesus says to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.

"Here is a perfect example of mercy, perfect grace, and righteousness. He condemns the sin but not the sinner." But more

than that, He called her to a new life. While acknowledging that she had sinned, He turned her in a new direction with real encouragement.

He silences her accusers.

This is such a fascinating story in which Jesus shows mercy and compassion for this woman. At the same time, HE rejected the double standard for women and men and turned the judgment upon the male accusers. However, what makes this story interesting is how He goes about bringing revelation into this situation.

Instead of jumping to this woman's defense by arguing her case and quoting scriptures, He makes space and time for the Holy Spirit to bring truth and light to her accusers.

He does not bring answers but instead asks questions. He asks critical questions to her male accusers that allow for self-introspection and contemplation, revealing their blind spots. Essentially He is asking them, "Are you any better than her?" In today's context, we could rephrase this question "Are you more anointed, gifted, equipped, or called than HER?"

When we read this story, we see how Jesus's surprising question causes a startling silence in the temple as the veil of deception slowly peels back from these men's eyes. I imagine this scene unfolding over a few hours as, one by one, her accusers are convicted in their hearts of their failure to see the whole truth sets in, and they start to walk away from one by one.

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I feel like Jesus' response guides how we as women are to react when we come up against these situations. Far too often, the temptation is to take the bait and start fiercely defending ourselves with zealous feminist arguments and debates on the topic of women in ministry, women in society, etc.

However, when I read this story, I am more encouraged to be found being like Jesus and doing what He so clearly did. Firstly He was just doing the work; He preached and taught in the temple. Secondly, His response is not one of a worldly defense attorney trialing a case to a jury but instead a gentle question allowing for the Holy Spirit to do His job to work in the hearts of man and bring gentle conviction and truth. Thirdly He chooses grace, compassion, and mercy over judgment as standard practice. This is a reminder of how we are to treat our accusers, especially our brothers and sisters who disagree with us.

The dangers of the “feminism movement.”

Quite simply, feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities. It's about respecting diverse women's experiences, identities, knowledge, and strengths and striving to empower all women to realize their full rights. When you read this definition, you see that this is in line with scripture according to Genesis and according to Jesus' treatment of women.

While I agree with the definition of feminism as a woman, I am personally not in agreement with this movement, especially in the church. This is because I have seen how this thought process can

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lead women, "of course," to focus on the wrong things resulting in sin and distraction rather than freedom and purpose.

Before I lose or offend you, let me explain what I mean by this statement.

I have found that self-proclaimed feminists tend to be firmly planted in defensive and combative mode against the "oppressive enemy of MEN." They have taken it upon themselves to become their own "liberators." And while they are primarily defending women's rights which is a good thing, I often find that the spirit empowering this movement is not the Spirit of God but humanism and bitterness. Wow, I know that is quite a challenging statement to make but let me ask you this, when have you last seen a self-proclaimed feminist walking in humility, honor, and love in their relationships with her fellow man?

Yet this is what the Bible asks us to do, even with those we disagree with on specific issues.

Romans 12:10

Love must be sincere. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Outdo yourselves in honoring one another.

Romans 15:1

We who are firm in our convictions and faith ought to patiently put up with the weaknesses of those who are not strong and not just please ourselves.

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Another critical point is that men are not our enemies, even the oppressive ones.

Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Referring specifically to our brothers in the faith who advocate male-only leadership in the church, I sincerely believe that they do this due to a misunderstanding of scripture which, in all fairness, is a rather complex issue. (I will address this in the letters of Paul in a later chapter.)

Most men have a genuine reverence for scripture and a sincere heart desire to live out these sacred words before the Lord correctly.

Linked to this is the reality that this mindset of needing to “rule over women” is part of the curse pronounced over our gender in the garden of Eden.

Here is the thing we need to come to peace with, not everyone (both male and female) has yet been set free from this curse/mindset.

What if women resisted engaging in this battle with weapons fully loaded in the natural, and instead, we fight this battle in the correct realm, the realm of the spirit!

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How about we intercede for our brothers in Christ and pray that the Holy Spirit would bring divine revelation and truth into their minds and spirit.

Womankind, how about we follow in Jesus' footsteps and just get on with the work? When (not if) accusation and opposition come regarding our gender and calling, let's make every effort to respond in the same way as our teacher did and respond gently and lovingly, choosing to trust for the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do and change the hearts of His people!

He proclaims her forgiven.

Now let's deal with the reality that this woman was caught in sin. She was guilty as she was brought forward to Jesus. When I imagine this story, I always picture her naked as she was caught "in the act of adultery," clothed with guilt and shame.

In many ways, we were this woman being deceived like Eve in the garden of Eden and choosing to use our powerful feminine influence in the wrong way. Not only did Eve fall into this sin many years ago, but it can so easily beset us today. We need to live with the active awareness that, like it or not, we have the power to influence those around us for the better or worse. As women, we can so easily use this gift of influence/leadership as a tool of manipulation or control in situations emotionally, physically, or even mentally. I think that every one of us has been guilty of this at one time or the other.

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This story is significant for us because of the very two things that Jesus told this woman and is still telling us today.

Firstly, you need to soak in the profound overwhelming revelation that you are forgiven.

Whatever you have done, all the legitimate sins, mistakes, and errors of judgments are FORGIVEN. Even when you knowingly or unknowingly used your influence in the wrong way. His word over you today is as strong then as it is today. YOU ARE FORGIVEN; I DO NOT CONDEMN YOU!

This song of forgiveness is on repeat over your life from your Savior!

And His voice needs to be louder and more precise than any word of accusation by man or the enemy himself with thoughts that do not line up with his theme song over your life!

It's time to stop partnering with the accuser's voice that you are guilty of your past relationships, sins, your children, your husband, and your poor choices. You are no longer that naked, guilty, shame-filled woman that was thrown before Jesus!

You are the daughter of the most high God! Clothed with righteousness and the truth that CHRIST Himself, the anointed one, has declared you forgiven and free from your past and every mistake that goes with that! Choose to clothe yourself with this truth daily.

The anointing by a repentant sinner

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 7, Jesus is a guest in the home of Simon the Pharisee. As normal in that current day all the guests at the table were men. During the meal, a woman known as "a sinner" entered the room and anointed Jesus' feet with her tears and with some perfume. Her tears fell upon His feet, and she wiped them with her hair.

The Bible does not say whether she had encountered Jesus before this. Neither does the Bible disclose the nature of her sin. Women of the time had few options to support themselves financially; thus, her sin may have been prostitution. Had she been an adulteress, she would have been stoned.

When Jesus permitted her to express her love and appreciation to Him as she did, the host was offended. This story shows the manner of which Jesus dealt with one sinful woman. His unconditional love for both saints and sinners alike has been so well known that this woman dared to take this significant risk to publicly express her love and appreciation for Him by seeing her not as a sex object to be exploited but as a person of worth.

Go forth and sin no more.

Like it or not, aware or not, you are a leader and an influencer. God has given you unique traits as a woman that make you powerful in how you affect those around you. Now that we know, there is no further excuse. Let's use these skills, attributes, our femininity, body, and emotionality to lead people closer to the heart of God and His purposes for their lives!

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Just as a prostitute can use her femininity to cause men to fall into temptation because of her feminine power, so in the same, we can use our power to turn men, our families, and society as a whole toward God and advance His kingdom. Here on earth!

Now that we have been forgiven, redeemed, and freed by the ultimate women's liberator, let us reflect no longer on what we have been liberated from but instead on what we have been liberated FOR!

Reflection

Have I fully received forgiveness for my past mistakes and sins in every area of my life?

Pray into this.

Have I felt rejected, not seen, or oppressed in the church because of my gender?

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Pray and ask God to help you forgive those who may have knowingly or unknowingly caused you pain. Now, pray for these individuals. Release blessing over them and pray for God to bring revelation and truth into their lives in this area.



6.

Womanhood you are RESTORED

This encounter with the woman at the well is incredible on so many levels. He takes time to wait for her. He sees her and knows her. All her past, sins, and shortcomings. He reveals Himself to her as the savior, the ONE she's been waiting for! He reveals Himself to her gender. It is also the first time in Scripture that He verbalizes that He is the Christ, the Messiah.

The woman at the well in Samaria

The in-depth account of Jesus and the Woman at the Well (John 4:1) is highly important for understanding Jesus in different relationships: Samaritans, women, and sinners. By acknowledging and talking openly with this woman, Jesus crossed a couple of barriers that generally would have separated a Jewish rabbi or teacher from people like this Samaritan woman. Jesus did three things that were extremely unconventional, radical and counter cultural for His situation:

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- He, as a man, discussed theology openly with a woman.
- He, as a Jew, asked to drink from the ritually unclean bucket of a Samaritan.
- He did not avoid her presence, even though He knew her sinful past of having had five husbands previously and now living with a man who was not married to.

Upon their return to the well, the disciples showed their astonishment: "They were surprised that he was talking with a woman. A man in the Jewish community did not ordinarily talk with a woman in public, not even with his wife. For a teacher of the word or rabbi to discuss theology with a woman was downright scandalous. Jesus was not deterred because she was a woman. He did not hesitate to ask of the woman that she let Him have a drink from her vessel, but He also did not hesitate to offer her a drink of another kind as he says to her, "Salvation is of the Jews." John. 4:22. We see in this encounter that salvation was coming to the Samaritan woman from the Jews, and culturally there was great animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans who were considered a half-breed and an inferior race by the Jews.

This is a significant event that a woman, and what is more a "sinful woman," becomes a follower of Christ. Once taught, she goes out and proclaims Christ to the people of Samaria so that they too receive Him with faith. This is a historical event if one remembers the usual way women were treated by those who were teachers in Israel. In contrast, in Jesus of Nazareth's way of acting, such an event becomes normal.

He RESTORES womankind to her place in society and ministry.

The key point that Jesus taught but also lived out was that people as people irrespective of their social status, gender, the color of skin tone, or religious beliefs. He saw the woman at the well as someone as a person—not primarily a Samaritan, a woman, or a sinner. This evangelized woman became the first known evangelist in the bible!

She goes on to evangelize her community about a "a man" whom he claimed to be "the Savior of the world." Jesus liberated this woman and awakened her to a new life and purpose in which not only did she receive but also freely gave. The Bible says she brought "many Samaritans" to faith in Christ.

If we know who God is, we know that there are no coincidences with Him. He is never caught by surprise, but instead, He is intentional about everything having the bigger picture, outcome in mind.

This story perfectly demonstrates this. Jesus sits at the well and waits for this woman. His encounter with her restores her to her status in society as He models (to His disciples) how to treat women in society. After revealing Himself to her as the promised Messiah, He allows her to go forth and proclaim her message of salvation. Jesus uses her to go forth and "pave the way" for His ministry in this town. I believe that He knew that He would need her. He knew that once restored, she would use her influence in that town to draw many crowds to Him. People came because of her story,

which she passionately recounted dozens of times to all who would listen to her. I am sure we can all agree that Jesus could have ministered to this town without the Samaritan woman, but we can safely assume that it would not have produced the same results.

This story is a perfect example of how Jesus uses the best person to be part of His ministry team despite gender, nationality, etc. If this is how Jesus modeled ministry, should we not follow in His footsteps.

He turns her messy past into a message. He broke SHAME off our gender!

Another reason why this is such a great story is because of how Jesus directly addresses this woman's messy past. He prophetically acknowledges that He knows she had five husbands and that the man she currently lives with was not her husband. He is not intimidated or put off by the fact that she has a sinful past. Instead, He acknowledges her sin and chooses to reveal Himself to her. In this way, He is proclaiming acceptance of her as a sinner that was lost and in need of a Messiah. This revelation of His unconditional love produces significant results! Instead of being ashamed to admit her past mistakes, she uses it as a testimony! I love how her encounter with Christ so clearly breaks shame off her life, freeing her to truly boldly testify about the saving grace of the Messiah.

Womankind, this is whom God calls you to be! God has not saved and redeemed you so that you can live in shame about your past mistakes and regrets. Jesus does not only want to encounter you

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with His unconditional love and acceptance for yourself, but He wants to set your testimony and voice on fire to like with this woman. He has liberated you so that you can liberate others!

Consider this analogy. We were once bound in a prison of sin and darkness. Hiding from everyone, including ourselves, with the sins and regrets of our past. But then we encounter Christ and hear about the redemption He bought for us on the cross of Calvary. Because HE paid for our sins, we are completely forgiven and restored to our rightful place as sons and daughters of God!

Our salvation is like being freed from the prison cell of sin and eternal death. This is excellent news. However, as we walk out of the prison cell, some still have a souvenir with us...handcuffs. These handcuffs represent shame. Although we are technically "free," we live limited lives bound by fear and regret. The handcuffs of shame hinder our ability to live fully and help others. Think about how difficult it is for someone with handcuffs to do menial tasks like cook, bath, or helping someone escape from prison.

God doesn't want us to live like this; instead, the great liberator Himself wants to liberate you from eternal death and all the harmful effects of your past. He wants to bring complete healing and deliverance from the pain, shame and regrets, and memories of your past. It doesn't matter that you have been freed from abuse, divorce, alcoholism, etc. What matters is that you are free! He wants to break your handcuffs but not altogether remove them! Instead, he wants to redeem your past so that you can release hope to many

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others. Your handcuffs are no longer a hindrance, but they now become weapons of warfare for you to use against the enemy! Instead of your broken handcuffs reminding you of pain and failure, they now adorn your wrists like jewelry pieces. And you boldly wear them, dangling as you meet various people along your path. When curious people ask you what they are, you are ready to joyfully share your testimony of how you were once lost, abused, discarded, and messed up but that you encountered The One who, despite all of this, chose to love you. Anyway and call you HIS!

Womankind, your past does not disqualify you, but rather it's the very thing God wants to use to qualify you to be used for His purposes! If you would allow Him, He will use your personal message to release a powerful fragrance of hope, healing, and restoration to many more, just like He did with this lady! Jesus liberated you so that you can liberate others! This is who you are and whom He has called you to be!

Reflection

Is there anything from your past that you felt disqualified you from being used by God?

Do you still struggle with Shame related to your past?

Pray into this and ask God to break this off your life.

Looking back over your life, can you see areas where God has brought restoration? How can you share this as part of your testimony to help liberate other women who have similar experiences?

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Personal reflections and notes



7.

Womanhood, you are ACCEPTED

Let's look at the story from Luke 7 when a woman comes to crack a jar of perfume and cleans Jesus' feet.

Firstly, Jesus acknowledges her presence! During this era in history, a woman's presence was equated to a dog's.

He also acknowledges and receives her act of worship and declares it as accepted and historical.

He publicly restores her to the church!

The anointing in Bethany

In the gospel of Matthew (26:6) Jesus is seen acknowledging as a woman's display of sacrificial love and devotion to Him. He assures her that she will have a place in the gospel wherever preached. From this story we see that Mary anticipated Jesus' death. Each of

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the two sisters, Mary and Martha, had their unique way of ministering to Jesus: Martha, we see was more practical, served Him a meal and took care of the practicalities of hosting Jesus while Mary lavishly anointed Him and sat at his feet.

Another story is of a woman who pours the entire contents of a costly perfume over the head of Jesus. Only in John's account is the woman identified as Mary, with the earlier reference establishing her as the sister of Martha and Lazarus. According to the gospel of Mark's, the perfume was the purest of spikenard. Some of the onlookers are outraged because this expensive perfume could have been sold for a year's wages, which Mark estimates as 300 denarii (a lot of money!) and the money given to the poor.

In the book of Matthew it states that the "disciples were indignant," and John's gospel says that Judas was most offended (which is explained by the narrator as being because Judas was a thief and wanted to steal the money for himself). In all of these accounts, Jesus justifies Mary's action by saying that they would always have poor people among them and would be able to assist them in the future but that he would not always be with them. He explains that her anointing was done to prepare Him for His burial and upcoming death. "Mary seems to have been the only one who was both proactive and sensitive to the impending death of Jesus and who was willing to give a tangible expression of her love and appreciation for him. Jesus' reply shows his acknowledgement and acceptance of her act of devotion."

The battle to be Martha or Mary

This story is essential for us as women because it again reminds us of who we are. As I stated in previous chapters, Jesus proclaims forgiveness over our gender for the sin of Eve. However, this story acknowledges the innate response of our gender to our savior and what He has done for us.

Mary is the sister of Lazarus, who knew Jesus as a friend as scripture tells us He visited Lazarus and had a friendship with him. She encountered His compassion and empathy, which we see in Jesus coming to them once He hears about the death of Lazarus. She also experienced the incredible miracle of her brother's resurrection!

Now Mary was already a worshiper whose heart chose always to remain at the feet of Jesus and soak in His presence. Her preference was worship over doing things or busyness. We see this in how she was chastised by her sister, Martha, for not "being in the kitchen," behind the scenes, doing things rather than out front with the rest of the disciples receiving directly, first-hand from her Saviour.

As both a pastor's wife and a pastor, I have often felt myself in this battle between being Mary or Martha. In church, I have especially felt the pressure to conform to the expected norm of being the "stereotypical pastor's wife" of being in the kitchen baking cookies for the elders' meeting or in the back teaching children's ministry. I constantly (even still today) feel this expectation of what is considered normal and acceptable because of my gender.

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Now I must say that I deeply value the gift of hospitality and children's ministry. They are vital ministries that are essential to the church. And yes, I am still involved in these ministries, which is both a pleasure and blessing for me to serve my church community in these areas. There is nothing wrong with this. However, what is wrong is the assumption I often come across that this is where I belong and that this is all I have to contribute as a woman, especially in the church.

It is this mindset that I want to address that is wrong and against God's intention and purpose for our gender!

The truth is that God equips us with gifts, talents, and abilities according to our calling and His plans for our lives, not according to our gender!

Truthfully, and I know this to be true for so many other women in the church, I have not been gifted in the area of catering. While I can bake a decent birthday cake for my children's birthday parties and my family enjoys and appreciates my cooking, I can honestly say that this is not my strong point. I am one of those women that starts stressing and sweating when I have to prepare a meal for anything over 10 people (double my family size). It's just not my gift or where the Lord has graced me!

Instead, He has given me other gifts like leadership, communication, preaching, and teaching. My heart longs to be in the front alongside my husband, sitting at the feet of Jesus, contending for the more of God, for the kingdom to break through

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and His presence to fall upon us. Even though I am a woman and a wife, this is where He has called me. This is where I belong in my ministry and calling.

To all the other women reading this who might face the same battles, I want to encourage you to be whom God has called you to be and not try to live to please people. Be inspired to heed the voice of your Lord instead of the voice of others' expectations. The bottom line is to be wherever He has called you to be. If that's in the kitchen (where we know God is also present and at work) or in the back, then be obedient and serve with a good heart, understanding that obedience is better than sacrifice. Obedience to the Father should be all of our ultimate goal - both males and females. There is provision and grace to operate in the place where He calls you to be, and in the season, He calls you to be in that!

Womenkind, if and when God does call you to the front, receiving directly from Him, know that even if others rebuke or judge you, Jesus affirms your place and your choice for Him rather than fulfilling society's expectations both in and outside the church.

Our natural response as women is WORSHIP.

Mary had an extraordinary relationship with Jesus. After seeing first-hand His miraculous displays of power and spending time at His feet under His teaching and ministry, she knew and understood that Jesus was going to the cross to be crucified and, more importantly, WHY He was going! He was going to bring pay for OUR sin and become the lamb who takes away the sin of the

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world! He was also going to become a curse so that we would no longer have to live under the curse we came under in the garden of Eden.

As women, our gender understands the fulfillment of scripture playing out as “our seed will crush the head of the serpent” described in Genesis. He was going to the cross to bring restoration and redemption for all humankind, and our default response as women is to WORSHIP. And not just any worship, not half-hearted worship that doesn't cost us anything. No, our response is extravagant worship that gives all we have to give! Our response acknowledges the magnitude of our savior's sacrifice; how can we not offer all of ourselves?

I love our gender's depiction of worship with Jesus! We hold nothing back; He is worthy of it all!

My expression of worship is dance! Sometimes I wish I could sing or was naturally more musical (like my husband), but it's not. I sometimes wish I had a different expression of worship because I find the other forms of worship to be more accessible and less costly. While one might be able to sing half-heartedly or mime, one cannot dance halfway. Dance is one of those forms of worship that require total commitment. When I dance, it requires my whole body and spirit to be involved. While I have sometimes found this expression of worship to be misunderstood or frowned on in the church, it is a beautiful way to worship the Lord, and I love it! When I dance, it's as if every fiber in my being, every muscle, and nerve, gives praise to my creator! When I dance, it releases freedom from

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heaviness for myself and others. Sometimes we all want our gifts and callings to look different, more straightforward, and similar to others, but God is looking for worshipers who will worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Be encouraged to do this in whatever form of worship (whether in song, dance, instrument, art, etc.) that He calls you to. Whether conventional or not.

Womankind, this is who you are, an extravagant lover of Jesus!

And Jesus loves it!

What others might find indignant and offendable - Jesus receives!
He receives your gift, your act of worship; He receives you!

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Reflections

Do I sometimes struggle between being Mary or Martha? How so?

What is my unique form of worship that God calls me to?

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Do I fully believe that God willingly accepts this?

Do I fully believe that God accepts me for who I am?

Pray into this.

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Personal reflections and notes



8.

Womanhood, you are RECOGNIZED

In this incredible story of the woman with the issue of blood, we see one woman's desperate situation turns into a bold step of faith that causes the kingdom of God to break through into her current reality.

Mark 5:25-34

25 A woman in the crowd had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much suffering at the hands of many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but instead had become worse. 27 She had heard reports about Jesus, and she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His outer robe. 28 For she thought, "If I just touch His clothing, I will get well." 29 Immediately, her flow of blood was dried up; and she felt in her body and knew without any doubt that she was healed of her suffering. 30 Immediately, Jesus, recognizing in Himself that power had gone out from Him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched My clothes?" 31 His disciples said

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to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in around You from all sides, and You ask, 'Who touched Me?'" 32 Still, He kept looking around to see the woman who had done it. 33 And the woman, though afraid and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell before Him and told Him the whole truth. 34 Then He said to her, "Daughter, your faith, personal trust, and confidence in Me has restored you to health; go in peace and be permanently healed from your suffering."

Radical faith in a hopeless situation

In this story, we see a woman in a hopeless situation. The scriptures tell us she had been suffering from an illness for 12 years and that the doctors could not help her; in fact, their intervention was making her condition worse! Not only had she tried many treatments from many physicians to no avail, but she had spent all the money that she had in the process.

As women, most of us understand the discomfort, pain, and inconvenience that comes with enduring a 3-5 day mensuration cycle, but can you imagine having a painful period for 12 years?! One can only imagine the embarrassment and pain she must have endured by prodding and poking in one gynecological area by doctors who were probably primarily men and were clearly out of their depth in this expertise.

I love quite a few things about this woman, but firstly, I love how she was still able to keep hope alive despite her enduring suffering for such a long time of illness, physical pain, and emotional disappointment!

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When she heard reports of Jesus coming, the scripture says that she thought to herself, "If I just touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed!" We need to remember that until that moment, nobody had ever experienced such a divine miracle that a healing miracle could be transmitted through an inanimate object like a garment without the verbal proclamation of healing. Although we see similar displays of healing miracles like this later in scripture with Paul, this was the first of its kind.

This woman understood something about Jesus that not even His closest disciples fully comprehended yet: He is God; he is all-powerful and able to do the impossible!

This understanding of who God was and her faith in Him brought forth a powerful display of the kingdom resulting in her immediate healing after touching His hem!

She came for healing but received so much more.

This woman had incredible faith in God's ability and power. She knew a lot about God, but there was something she didn't know - how He would react to her presence.

We need to understand that she was considered ceremonially "unclean" in those days due to her bleeding condition. This meant that she would not have been permitted to enter the temple area for Jewish ceremonies. According to the Law, anything or anyone she touched became "unclean." The fact that she was in a crowd pressing around Jesus means that each person who bumped into her would have been considered unclean - including Jesus!

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As soon as the woman touches Jesus' garment, her bleeding stops, and she knows she's been healed. In an instant, Jesus does what no doctor in twelve years had been able to. This proves the power of Christ, of course, but it also illustrates an important point about Jesus and the Law. In Leviticus 15:31, God says, "You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them." In the Old Testament, the temple was where God dwelt among the Israelites, but in the New Testament, God dwelt among men in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, the penalties of the Law are reversed, and the contamination of this world did not affect Christ. The woman did not make Jesus (God's dwelling) unclean—He made her clean!

I love how Jesus immediately responds to the woman who touched His clothing and was healed. People were pushing and pressing into Him from all over, yet He stopped, turned, and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" The disciples were incredulous, but Jesus knew that healing power had gone out of Him.

This act of faith grabbed the attention of Jesus!

Not knowing how He would respond, she fell before Him, trembling and afraid, she explained herself.

One of the best facets of this story is Jesus' response to her!

While others would have judged her for breaking society customs and condemned such an outrageous action, Jesus publicly recognizes her, acknowledges, and affirms her bold faith! He

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proclaims to her, "Daughter, your faith in me has made you WHOLE; go in peace and suffer no more."

Womankind, this is your Messiah's response to you!

Even though there are so many people praying to Jesus right at this very minute, needing so many things from Him. People all around the world.

He sees you. He acknowledges you. And He welcomes your audacious faith in Him to pull forth the "never been seen before" miracles into everyday life!

Matthew 11:12, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men (and WOMEN as we see from this story) lay hold of it."

Womankind, keep forcefully bringing forth the kingdom of heaven into your life and for those around you! This is who you are!

Reflection

Do I believe that God fully sees and recognizes me?

What areas of my life (or that of others) do I believe God is calling me to forcefully pull down the kingdom of heaven into our earthly situations through prayer and possible action?

Pray into this.



9.

Womanhood, you are CALLED

Mary Magdalene (also called Miriam of Magdala) is among the women depicted in the New Testament who accompanied Jesus and His twelve apostles and helped support the men financially. According to all four gospels, she was one of the women who remained at Jesus' crucifixion.

For centuries, Mary Magdalene was referred to in Western Christianity as a prostitute, although nowhere does the New Testament identify her as such. However, despite some discrepancies regarding her unsavory past, one thing is commonly agreed Mary Magdalene was a prominent leader of the early Christian movement that promoted women's leadership.

We see references in the Gospel of John that the risen Jesus gives Mary exceptional teaching. Later literary tradition, however, names her as "the apostle to the apostles" and suggests that historically Mary was a prophetic visionary and leader within one part of the early Christian movement after the death of Jesus.

Symbolism for womankind at the crucifixion

I want to draw your attention to the symbolism displayed at the calvary cross at the crucifixion. Scriptures tell us that out of the 12 disciples, only one was present at the crucifixion - John. All the other disciples forsook the Lord and fled (Matthew 26:25), including Peter, who denied Jesus three times. However, a group of women was at the cross, weeping and mourning the crucifixion of their Lord.

Amongst these were two Marys.

One Mary was the reformed prostitute- representing the fallen Eve for womankind. The old. The past.

The other Mary was the mother of Jesus. The woman that said YES on behalf of womankind. The new. The future.

Scripture tells us that these women never left Jesus's side throughout the crucifixion. Where was there to go, really? The ONE who brought redemption and restored them to their true identity as daughters of God was being crucified on a cross. It must have been pure agony to endure witnessing Jesus nailed to a cross and die a slow and gruesome death before their eyes, knowing that there was nothing they could do to help Him. Yet they remained. Their presence showed solidarity and their commitment to following Christ even unto death.

This is who you are, womankind, a faithful, enduring wholehearted disciple of Christ. You are trustworthy, able to withstand and endure even through pain for the cause of Christ.

Woman, you are CALLED.

John 20:11-18

New International Version

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 Now, Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

First things first

The New Testament says she saw Jesus laid in a tomb. Mark 16:9 reports that after His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

The story is fantastic and so powerful for us as women. This single passage of scripture silences all theological debates that the church has been engaged in for centuries regarding women's role in ministry.

The truth is, as Bill Johnson so nicely puts it, "Jesus is perfect theology."

He came to earth literally so that we could imitate Him. So that we can live the way He lived and think the way He thought. He is our supreme role model for life and all life issues. He is our great "Rabboni" - teacher.

Scripture states that after the resurrection, Jesus chose to reveal Himself first to Mary. It is as if the storyline which ended in Eve falling into deception and sin on behalf of Womankind in a garden is picked up again in another garden years later but with a very different result. This time womankind, we are precisely where we need to be, at the side of Jesus (even when we can no longer see Him). We are at the source Himself, receiving our identity and instruction first-hand, leaving no room for doubt nor deception.

In this encounter, Jesus comes personally to reveal Himself as the resurrected Lord - to a woman! He then tells her to go and TELL everyone about what she saw and experienced.

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Yes, the first person that was SENT, commissioned to preach the most incredible message of all time- the essence of the gospel that Jesus is alive - was a woman!

I believe that it is no coincidence that the first act of our resurrected Lord is to restore women to our purpose, to our identity in God as daughters.

This act is general for women yet profoundly personal at the same time. Jesus calls her by name "Mary" so that she would recognize His voice and the revelation that it is Him - her God and Savior that was calling her.

Regarding the whole debate (that is still rocking the church today) about whether women should be allowed to preach from the pulpit, the reality is that the black and white facts are startling.

The first evangelist recorded in scripture was the Samaritan woman who, after Jesus personally revealed himself to her as the Messiah, went on to preach the gospel to her entire town resulting in many coming to faith in Christ.

The first person that Jesus revealed Himself to as the resurrected Christ and then went on to send forth to proclaim the good news is a woman!

Irrespective of people's opinions, theology, or doctrinal views, the facts remain the facts, and the truth remains the truth.

Womankind, today I want you to recognize His voice that He is calling you by name.

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He calls you into your identity as a daughter of the living God, and
He calls you into the calling and purpose for your life!

The wrestle with calling

This calling can be a real struggle for many women. I know that it was for me personally. I remember distinctly receiving Jesus as my savior at the tender age of fourteen. As I grew in the Lord, I remember a passion starting to be birthed in my spirit to teach God's word.

I got involved in the leadership of Christian union (a Christian evangelism club) in high school and would start teaching and sharing with great vigor to my peers what I had learned from scripture. I was also actively involved in youth ministry in my church, and I distinctly remember being asked to share my testimony in front of a large crowd during one of our outreach missions. After sharing my story about God and how His love had transformed my life, I knew that this was the very thing I wanted to do with the rest of my life!

Soon after, I remember being at church while a visiting prophet came to minister one evening. She was a woman who traveled around the world ministering and teaching, and she prophesied that I would one day be doing what she was doing.

Although I didn't fully understand that word at the time, I received it with great Joy.

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At another time in my youth, I received another prophetic word that they saw me with a microphone in my hands, which God called me to do. I just assumed that that meant I could and should sing, and I promptly tried out for the worship team, where I was politely turned down. They were right; let's just say that singing is not one of the Lord's talents, even though I desired it. I went off to "write off" that prophetic word as one of those missed words. Never did I consider that this word could mean public speaking or preaching.

You see, I was a broken vessel. Having grown up in a highly dysfunctional, divorced home with non-Christian parents at that time. I had zero confidence and extremely low self-esteem. I always felt like I was the "wrong" something. The wrong gender, the wrong ethnicity, the wrong skin color, which, having grown up in post-apartheid South Africa, didn't help either.

I remember knowing that God was calling me but couldn't understand why? I mean, there were so many more qualified, talented people around me who were worthy of this call; why would God choose me?

Womankind, do you sometimes feel this way?

If so, I want to tell you what I wish someone had told me back then. These feelings and thoughts of doubt and inadequacy are the enemy's tactics—the assignment of abortion on your destiny and purpose. As we know, in today's society, the most efficient and easiest (not to mention evil) way to stop life is in the womb. Before

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life (destiny, purpose) has even had a chance to take its first breath yet.

In my book "Original design," I explain more about the inner healing journey God took me on as a young woman at the age of eighteen. There was so much I needed healing and deliverance from. I had to receive healing from childhood memories, painful experiences, and years of emotional abuse. I needed to learn how to forgive and step into freedom and true peace. I also needed deliverance from wrong mindsets, repetitive patterns of sinful behavior, shame, inferiority, and deep insecurity.

If you can identify with any of these, I want to encourage you to go on your inner healing journey with God.

"He is not only the Savior of your spirit but the liberator of your emotional soul!"

You should also know that God loves using broken vessels. As the faithful potter, He puts us back together, nothing missing, nothing lacking. However, He does it in such a marvelous way that although we are WHOLE, the places of our "cracks" are still evident to allow "light and healing" to shine through to bring hope to others.

This is my story if He can use me, with my broken background and un-pedigreed heritage - He can use anybody!

Very soon after my healing journey, I met my husband. A fantastic, extravagant lover of Jesus. We both wanted the same things in life;

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we wanted to be used by God to make a difference in this world and dedicate the rest of our lives to this mission of “going forth and making disciples!”

Not only is he handsome and loves people. He is exceptionally gifted by God. I often joke that God “spilled the jar of talents” when he made Ricky in his mother's womb. He is multi-talented, a powerful, charismatic preacher, an anointed worshiper and musician, and a gifted writer.

We met in youth ministry at our church, where we were involved in leading a band called UWJ - Useless without Jesus. He was the singer, and I was one of the backup dancers; we traveled around the country evangelizing at school and youth events. We both knew we wanted to do life together and saw no point in delaying the matter. So a year and a half later, we got married just two months short of me turning twenty.

We continued to do the work of the ministry as a married couple; however, I noticed some things started to change.

Ricky started receiving more invitations to preach and teach rather than sing and lead worship. God opened doors for him to travel and minister at various churches and events, allowing him to grow even more in this gift. I remember being excited and supportive in this metamorphosis of ministry, and for years, this became my role. The loving, supporting wife (and intercessor) cheerleaded him on from the front row while we traveled around the country as he accepted various speaking invitations. After many years of part-

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time ministry, we both sensed the time for him to step into full-time ministry. Soon after, God opened a door for him to become a full-time associate pastor at a Vineyard church. We also started our family, and I started spending less time involved in church activities and more time focusing on being present to our three young children.

However, something started to happen as I was pregnant carrying my first son. I remember being woken up in the middle of the night with sermons. I started preaching in my dreams. Messages and teachings were flooding through my spirit, keeping me sometimes frustratingly out of sleep.

One night, I remember saying to the Lord, why are You giving me these sermons and teachings? I am not the preacher in this family; You should give them to Ricky. Yet they would keep coming; divine inspiration to start teaching God's word again began to flow, yet there was no outlet.

I started getting involved in leading children's ministry as this was my season in the back of the church with the kids while my husband was working in the front. While I served in this ministry with lots of peace and joy during this season, I felt that my role as the "pastor's wife" was becoming increasingly locked in and defined by what others saw as the norm.

I was asked to lead children's ministry and help with hospitality but never to preach or teach, not by my husband or church leadership.

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So I continued to wait. I distinctly remember waiting for confirmation of my calling. Even though I could increasingly sense the Lord calling me, I was waiting for one of the male figures in my life to affirm me and call me out. It was as if, without this affirmation, I couldn't step out to lead or teach, and I now realize I was waiting for "permission" to step out.

I want to point out that in no way was this the intention or heart of the leadership of our church which fully believes in women in leadership as a Vineyard movement. This was more of an internal conflict than a real issue in the life of our church or my home.

As I now reflect on this time and process it with my husband, he honestly told me that he did not encourage me in this because he didn't know I was waiting for permission. He thought I knew that I had it. He assumed that I would see that he would support me if this were what I felt God calling me to do.

The curse of not seeing

With all my heart, I genuinely believe this and believe that it comes back to one of the consequences of the curse from Eve eating the forbidden fruit.

In Genesis 1, "She will yearn for her husband, but he will rule over her."

Although my husband was not "ruling over me," I believe I was yearning for his acknowledgment and affirmation, and he simply "did not see me." Of course, he saw me in the natural and loved

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me. But he could not see me the way God my Father saw me, my destiny, and my calling.

After at least four years of wrestling with my desire to teach and step into what I sensed God calling me to, I remember hearing the voice of the Lord asking me if I was going to obey His voice or continue to wait for the voice of a man to call me out.

I said I would wait for a man's voice to confirm my calling. However, one night I had a dream. I went to my senior pastor in the dream and asked if I could join the preaching team to test the waters in preaching.

He received this with great joy and allowed me the opportunity for us to test this gift on our church platform.

My first preaching was a great success, and I and others sensed a grace upon my life for sharing God's word when he invited me to join the preaching team.

From there onwards, I started to teach at various other small group meetings. Also, I began to sense the Lord leading me to teach verbally and start writing and developing practical teaching resources that would build and strengthen the body of Christ.

That's what I am currently doing, and to my great joy and satisfaction, to the benefit of many.

My husband is now one of my most incredible supporters and is increasingly intentional in trying to encourage me in my writing and teaching.

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I have released five books and preached many sermons during the last four years. Doors have opened up to minister and teach alongside my husband as God uses us increasingly in team ministry together. There has been much fruit on this, as I frequently receive feedback on how God has used this to help bless others.

I am also co-pastoring alongside my husband in leading our church. I am a visionary leader alongside him and responsible for oversight of half of the ministries in our church and the other. He often verbalizes how grateful he is for fully stepping into my leadership role besides him in leading our church community, it's a big job, and he willingly admits he would not have been able to do it without me.

Looking back now, I am so thankful that I decided to follow and obey the small still voice of the Lord calling me to step out of the background and into the place where he was calling me - which so happens to be alongside my husband. This was where I was meant to be all along. Not because I am his wife but rather simply because this is the grace upon my life and gift mix that the Lord has equipped me with to "do the work."

Womankind, if I had to ask you today, are you still wrestling with the calling upon your life? Are you perhaps still waiting to be called out by male leadership?

If so, I want to encourage you to bravely step out onto the waters and follow the voice of your Savior, beckoning you to come and walk with Him on the waters.

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Work on your healing journey, and get your heart right. Then fix your eyes on Him and follow the leading of His voice. He is waiting for you.

Reflection

Do I believe that Jesus calls me not irrespective of the fact that I am a woman but BECAUSE I am a woman?

What precisely could my unique calling look like? What are my God-given talents and gifts in the workplace, home, and church?

Is God asking me to take any action steps to start walking in the calling and purpose He has for my life?

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Personal reflections and notes



10.

Womanhood, you BELONG

Jesus was no people pleaser.

Sometimes I think that the way the modern church presents the gospel causes people to only think of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb that went to the cross on our behalf. While this is entirely true, there is more, so much more! Scripture refers to Jesus being the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lamb (Revelation 5).

Jesus came to save the world and turn it upside down and inside out! He had no problem challenging the status quo of the day nor the religious, cultural, and worldly mindsets that dictated society.

He was loving and gentle yet a radical, non-violent revolutionary that had no problem standing for truth and righteousness even in the face of opposition.

One of the areas Jesus took much criticism was in His treatment of women. He respected them, acknowledged them, affirmed them, and gave them a place of belonging...which was with Him.

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Luke 8:1–3

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their means.

Luke's gospel is unique in documenting that many women benefited personally from Jesus' ministry and ministered to Him and with Him—even accompanying Him and the Twelve on evangelistic journeys. Most prominent among these is Mary Magdalene. Jesus travels through cities and towns, preaching the Kingdom of God, evangelizing, and accompanied by the Twelve.

The gospel accounts seem to be to bring into certain focus women, of whom there were "many," definitely more than twelve. It also presents them as recipients of healing at different levels of need and as actively involved with Jesus and the Twelve, accompanying them in ministry on their travels. Luke makes particular reference to the financial support of these women to Jesus' ministry. He highlights that these included women who were prominent in the public life of the state as well as in the church.

Luke's account specifies two categories that people received healing: evil spirits and infirmities. Jesus liberated and humanized people who were otherwise enslaved or destroyed by forces within

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themselves and society. Jesus healed many people, both men, and women, of "evil spirits and infirmities." Only of Mary Magdalene does Luke provide details of her healing, stating that "seven demons" had been cast out. These "many" women as Luke mentions had been healed of various illnesses—physical, emotional, and mental. No specific information is provided on Mary Magdalene's "seven demons." It is important to note that women whose conditions subjected them to scorn and penalty found in Jesus a Liberator who not only enabled them to find health but who dignified them as whole persons by accepting their ministries to Himself and the Twelve.

This is significant that women had such an open and prominent part in the ministry of Jesus. Luke's word for their "ministering" is widely used in the New Testament. Its noun, *diakonos*, is variously translated as "minister," "servant," and "deacon" (the latter for Phoebe in Romans 16:1 and the pastoral letters).

In summary, Jesus attracted to His movement a large number of women, ranging from some in desperate need to some in official circles of government. He brought healing, redemption, and restoration to their lives. Then He put them to work in ministering with Him and the twelve male disciples.

The word "disciple" means to be learned from a teacher and imitating them. This is what these women did.

We need to have the complete revelation of scripture that teaches us that while Jesus may have started His ministry with the calling

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out of the original twelve male disciples, His ministry grew to include many more disciples. Some whose names became known and others not.

He may have started with twelve, but His ministry ended with many disciples, and many amongst these were women disciples.

I have often wondered why there is no book written by a female disciple included in the gospels. We need to understand the roles that women played in society during these times.

Women's rights in New Testament times

The social condition of women in the first century had been radically altered from that of their ancient sisters. By the time of Jesus, the role of women had drastically changed for the worse. In theory, women were held in high regard by first-century Jewish society, but this was not always true in practice. The concept of *tzenuah*, or the private role of the woman, was based on Psalm 45:13: "All glorious is the princess in her chamber." While a man's primary responsibility was seen as public, a woman's life was confined almost entirely within the private family sphere.

Women were not allowed to testify in court. This categorized them with Gentiles, minors, deaf-mutes, and "undesirables" such as gamblers, the insane, and pigeon-racers, who were also denied that privilege.

Customarily, even a woman of stature could not engage in commerce and would rarely be seen outside her home. Only a

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woman in dire economic straits, who was forced to become the family breadwinner, could engage in her small trade. If a woman was ever in the streets, she was heavily veiled and prohibited from conversing with men. It is the way of a woman to stay at home, and it is the way of a man to go out into the marketplace.

During these times, respectable women were expected to stay within the confines of the home. The terminology for a prostitute was "one who goes abroad." The first-century woman did not even do her shopping, except possibly to go out, accompanied by an enslaved person, to buy materials she would use to construct her clothing at home!

The women recounted in the New Testament were very likely illiterate since the rabbis did not consider it incumbent upon women to learn to read to study the Scriptures. Based on the passage in Deuteronomy 4:9, "teach them to your sons," the rabbis declared women to be exempt from the commandment to learn the Law of Moses.

Women were separated from men in private, public, and religious life. They could go to the Temple but could not venture beyond the confines of the Women's Court (Yes, there was a separate women's court!) There was no such court found in the original descriptions of Solomon's Temple, so we know it was added later. Women were not allowed to participate in public prayer at the Temple, although they were encouraged to have private prayer lives at home.

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The few rights included her right to go to the House of Study to hear a sermon or pray. Also, it was her fundamental right to attend a wedding feast, a house of mourning, or visit her relatives.

One passage perhaps best sums up the situation of women in the first century: "(They are) swathed like a mourner (referring to the face and hair coverings) isolated from people and shut up in prison."

What brought about this drastic change from the esteem women had in the times of the Hebrew Scriptures to their near exclusion from society by the era of the New Testament? This degraded view of a woman's role was likely imported from Greek thought. Through the influence of their heathen neighbors, the rabbis slowly relegated women to their first-century seclusion. As evidenced in the paragraphs above, these gender norms were not based on the Tanakh or Jewish culture but on Greek and Roman household codes that were widespread throughout their empires and occupied lands.

Jesus was a revolutionary in his regard for women.

Jesus elicited surprising reactions from His contemporaries in all facets of life. He was not afraid to challenge the status quo and reexamine the traditional ways Scripture had been interpreted. But without knowing the rabbinic attitudes that prevailed in Jesus' day, the uniqueness of His behavior escapes us.

By publicly including women in His ministry, Jesus shattered the prejudicial customs of His day. Why was it unusual for Jesus to

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Speak with women? Nothing in the Mosaic Law prevented men and women from conversing with one another! Yet the society of Jesus' day, with customs dictated by rabbinic Judaism, differed strikingly from the Old Testament social order.

Jesus shattered this darkness by offering His teachings freely to anyone who would listen irrespective if they were women or men!

In Matthew 15:22-28, Jesus spoke with a Canaanite woman. The disciples urged Him to send her away, for it was improper for a teacher to talk with a woman and a foreign one! At first, Jesus did not answer her request for help. But as she persisted with her great need and even greater faith, He had mercy on her and granted her request.

Time after time, in the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, we see Him offering His teachings, healing, and forgiveness to women and men. He treated everyone as equal. Often, the women were the most appreciative of His work and teaching.

Jesus' early followers continued to follow in His footsteps, including women in their gatherings (Acts 1:14) and counting them as fellow workers in the cause of sharing His message (Romans 16:3). It was only fitting that Jesus the Messiah, in His love, shattered the restricted status of women in the times in which He lived. Because of Him, all individuals, Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, can be one and enjoy unequaled freedom as children of God.

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Jesus modeled that women belong with Him. In society, church, government, leadership, and ministry.

Actions speak louder than words. Womankind, these are Jesus' words over your life. You BELONG!

Reflection

Do I fully believe that I personally and as a woman belong with Jesus?

Do I believe that He not only carefully and wonderfully created my gender but embraces my gender?

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Personal reflections and notes



11.

Womanhood, it's not too late

It's interesting that, as women, we often feel the effects of an invisible "biological clock." We can feel the pressure from this in our young adult life in need to find a spouse, needing to have children, and needing to fulfill our purpose. It's as if there is a "window open" in these areas for a limited period, and if we miss it, it's gone for good!

The reality is that this is often not the truth. Only in the case of physiological biology regarding bearing children (although often even in this, there is a lot more flexibility than initially thought) is there credible evidence of this.

I want to propose to you that the idea of this "limited open window" is not a truth from God but rather a lie from the enemy to cause discouragement and disillusionment in your life.

Our concept of time is not the same as God's nor our ways His ways!

The grieving sisters

John 11:1-44

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was less than two miles¹⁰ from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But I know that God will give you whatever you ask even now."

²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Even though they die, the one who believes in me will live; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

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³²When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹"Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the dead man's sister, "by this time, there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this to benefit the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face.

One of Jesus' most famous miracles was raising Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb. But it is also a striking reminder that while God works all things for the best, He doesn't always do it according to the schedules we expect.

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Jesus' followers had given up hope after Lazarus' death, but Jesus had a plan to glorify God and heal Lazarus in a more spectacular way than anyone expected. However, the central figure is Jesus, identified as "the resurrection and the life." When the brother of Mary and Martha became ill, they sent for Jesus. For some undisclosed reason, Jesus did not arrive until four days after Lazarus died. The grieving sisters, Martha first and then Mary met Jesus. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and proclaimed Himself as "the resurrection and the life." Martha gently reproached Jesus, "Lord, had you been here, my brother would not have died." She hastened to express complete confidence that God would grant whatever Jesus asked Him to give. Martha reflected a spiritual understanding beyond that required for preparing and serving a meal.

Apparently, Martha and not just Mary had benefited from the study. Mary stayed in the house until Jesus called for her. When Martha went to get her, Mary came and quickly fell at Jesus' feet (Mary is at the feet of Jesus in every appearance recorded in John's gospel). She repeated the words Martha already had used: "Lord, had you been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus was deeply moved upon seeing Mary and her friends weeping. They invited Jesus to come and see the tomb where Lazarus had been laid. Jesus burst into tears. The Jews standing by understood this as reflecting Jesus's love for Lazarus, "See how he loved him" (v. 36). The foursome of Jesus, Mary, Lazarus, and Martha had a close relationship as persons, with neither denial of gender differences nor its preoccupation. There were persons of both genders whose

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mutual respect, friendship, and love carried them through experiences of tension, grief, and joy. Jesus was secure enough to develop such a relationship with two sisters and their brother without fear for His reputation. When necessary, He could oppose them without fear of chauvinism. Jesus had much to do with the liberation and growth of Martha and Mary.

All hope is not lost.

I believe this is yet another profound story for womankind. All hope is not lost. Things may not be as they seem.

Jesus walks into a situation with these two women that is utterly Hopeless. Lazarus has been dead for four days. This is important because it highlights the magnitude of this miracle as decomposition of the body occurs after three days which is why Mary and Martha were concerned with the odor when Jesus wanted to open the tomb.

In an impossible situation, their brother is dead.

What impossible situation currently exists in your life today? Specifically, what looks impossible regarding your ministry, calling, and God-inspired dreams? What about the books you wanted to write? Songs you wanted to sing? Theatre pieces you wanted to produce? Organizations you wanted to start?

Do some things look like they will never happen? Too much time passed? Do you feel like it's too late, that you are too old? Are there

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Prophetic words written in your journal collecting dust, unfulfilled?

Womankind, if this is how you feel as you read this book, I want you to know that this story of these two women is for you.

All hope is NOT lost when Jesus enters the story!

Maybe your dreams, destiny, and calling seem dead. Perhaps even your desire to pursue them feels dead. Nothing but a long-ago distant memory.

Here is what I want you to hear today, Jesus is the resurrector! Resurrection is kind of "His thing!"

It is what He loves to do, and He wants to come into your life today to resurrect your calling, passions, and destiny! He wants to revive you and call you into a new season and a new life in Him.

Are you willing?

Ultimately is the Church of God not His church anyway? Is it not His to build, shape and mold according to how He sees fit

Matthew 16:18

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Reflection

In what areas of my life do I believe the lie that it is too late or that I am too old?

Are there any dreams or prophetic words that I have given up hope on?

Pray God to breathe His resurrection life over these.

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Personal reflections and notes



12.

Jesus breaks discrimination

While we know there were no women among the initial Twelve, nor were there any Gentiles. All four gospels indicate that all of the Twelve were Jewish males:

We see this in Matthew 10:1–4, Mark 3:13–19, Luke 6:12–16.

Although the names vary in these lists, their male identity is clear and is frequently used as biblical evidence that pastors should all be male.

The scriptures give no clear indication why Jesus in choosing His apostles is not a complete overcoming of male bias from the very beginning but here are some possible explanations.

By choosing 12 Jewish males, Jesus may have been offering a parallel to the 12 patriarchs or 12 tribes of Israel which were each headed by a son of Jacob.

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Another possibility surrounds the purpose of His choosing the Twelve: "so that they might be with Him," as He says in Mark 3:14.

The bible tells us that they were His constant companions both day and night, except when He sent them out to preach or do errands. It was the custom for Jewish rabbis to have such an entourage of followers he was busy training. "Such close and ongoing relationship with a member of the opposite sex would have given rise to the defamatory rumors".

However, the choosing of the Twelve to Jewish men is to be accounted for; Jesus did introduce important and lasting principles which bore fruit even in a former rabbi, the Apostle Paul, who could say, "There is not any Jew nor Greek, not any slave nor free, there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28. Furthermore, the inclusion of "many" women in the traveling company of Jesus represents a decisive move in the formation of a new community.

The Twelve are all men and all Jews, but even at this point, women "minister" to them. Unless one would argue that "apostolic succession" is for Jews only, it cannot be theologically argued that only men can become members of the clergy.

Many theologians believe a possible explanation to be that Jesus began where He was, within the structures of Judaism as He knew it in His childhood upbringing. As stated in earlier chapters, His closest companions started out being jewish men of about His own age. He may have there, but He did not stop or end there. Even in

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the early stages of His ministry, women became deeply involved at the power center of Jesus' movement.

Jesus broke down racial barriers.

In the story, with His encounter with the Samaritan woman first, Jesus breaks through the racial barrier. This is the barrier that the Samaritan woman initially reacted to: "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (John 4:9). Discrimination and racial prejudice ran deep between Jews and Samaritans during this time. Jesus'

Person by person, day by day, Jesus was and still is still pushing against the currents of prevailing culture — and winning.

Jesus healed a Roman centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13). We skim over this story without realizing the significant racial tension between Jews and Romans. The Jews disliked them for occupying their land, controlling their lives, and overtaxing them. However Jesus was willing to go to the centurion's house. To us, that's no big deal, but most Jews then wouldn't even consider going near the house of what they considered to be an "unclean" Gentile. The centurion said it would be sufficient if Jesus just spoke the word only because He knew how the chain of command worked (his boss gave him orders, and he gave his soldiers orders). Then Jesus commanded his faith and healed his servant.

Jesus delivered the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Matt. 15:21-28). Jesus ventured beyond the borders of Israel to meet this Greek lady (Mark 7:26). At first, He ignored her (Matt. 15:23). Then, He

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excluded her—"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24). She must have been unrelenting because she refused to take no for an answer, "Yes, Lord, yet even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (Matt. 15:27). Jesus tested her but was so impressed by her faith that He delivered her daughter from demons.

Jesus healed a Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19). When Jesus cleansed the 10 lepers near Samaria, only one returned to give thanks. Jesus was amazed, "Were there not the ten healed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17). Nine Jewish lepers were healed, but the grateful Samaritan was made completely whole.

Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).

Samaritans were the "bad guys" to the Jews, but Jesus deliberately made a Samaritan the hero of his story to show there is good in people we may not like. Notice that the priest and the Levite (two "good guys") did nothing to help the victim. Jesus redefined who our neighbor is—not just someone who lives on the same street, but any person of any ethnicity who is in need.

Jesus included the Gentiles and removed racial barriers. It caused a backlash from His own people and eventually led to His crucifixion at the request of the Jews.

Jesus also openly rebukes power plays and abuse of authority Jesus included the Gentiles and removed racial barriers. It caused a

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backlash from His own people and eventually led to His crucifixion at the request of the Jews.

Jesus also openly rebukes power plays and abuse of authority.

Matthew 20:25

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus was not afraid to break the barriers of discrimination and gender that bombarded the social norms of His day and, to some extent, still do in our current day.

He did not exclude people nor treat those differently who were not of the same gender or race as Himself. He proclaims what specifically justifies us as becoming part of His family which He places greater importance on even over His biological family.

"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:50

Empowered for ministry - Both Women and men at Pentecost

The bible tells us that after Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples met together in Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives in an upper room.

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“Those present were named as follows: Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James, son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas, son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers.” Acts 1:13

When Acts 2 starts off we learn the disciples “were all together in one place” when the Holy Spirit descended upon “each of them.” “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit empowered them.”

In this story, Luke clearly tells us that male and female disciples were present at Pentecost and that they all received the Holy Spirit's power enabling them to speak in other tongues.

One more point knocks that line of thinking, “ministry is only for men,” off its feet, and that is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Peter quotes Joel 2 says, “this event is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel”

“In the last days, God promises that he “will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:28).

This all points towards prophesying women at Pentecost. If this troubles some people, then they should be aware that there are other “troubling” verses, such as later in Acts 21:9 when we learn

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that Phillip has four daughters who prophesied. Prophecy is not always used for telling the future. Prophecy is encouragement and inspired teaching for the edification of the body of Christ.

That brings us to the next point. In Acts, we have women who can teach others the Gospel. This is not reserved for Acts 2 or Phillip's daughters. We see in scripture that a lady named Priscilla in Acts 18 who, along with her husband, teach Apollos more details about Jesus.

We have women who open their homes for the gathering of other Christians. Not only did we see this in the ministry of Jesus, and we see this in Paul's letters (Nympha, Phoebe, Aquila, and Priscilla, etc.). We also see this in Acts 12, where Mary's (the mother of John) house is used for the Christians to gather and pray for Peter's release from prison (12:12). When Peter miraculously escapes from prison with the assistance of angels, he goes to the house and is "greeted" by Rhoda, who is a servant. She then opens the gate not to the home but a gate from the street into the interior courtyard of Mary's house. Mary must have been relatively wealthy and able to provide space for these Christians to assemble and worship. In essence, she would be considered leading a church in today's terms.

The phenomena that occurred at Pentecost were all about the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples to empower them for the work of the ministry!

The Spirit came to give gifts needed to fulfill the great commission, which was Jesus' last parting orders to us before He ascended to

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heaven. He gave gifts and still does today to whoever needs them. He is not a differentiator between male or female or race or ethnicity.

He comes to give gifts to equip the body with gifts of prophecy, healing, anointed preaching and teaching, evangelism, leadership, worship, and much more.

The thing that doesn't make sense to me is why would anyone try to disqualify the people whom God clearly chose and still chooses today to empower and prepare to perform the work of the kingdom.

At the end of the day, the evidence is in the fruit. Consider the fruit and Womankind, just like at Pentecost, God has called you, chosen you, anointed you, and empowered you to do the kingdom's work.

The truth is you are precisely the gender you need to be, the color and ethnicity you are meant to be to fulfill the God-ordained plan and purpose He has for your life!

He has work for you to do and wants you to use not irrespective of the fact that you are a woman but BECAUSE you are a woman.

Embrace this truth and walk out the plans God has for your life in freedom, boldness, and confidence that the Creator of the universe knew what He was doing when He created you! You have everything you need. You are exactly whom you need to be!

Reflection

Read and meditate on Psalm 139.

Do I fully believe God made me wonderfully and has specific plans and purpose for my life, which He preordained before I was born?

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Personal notes and reflections from this chapter.



13.

Paul and the controversial letter

It astounds me how 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is still used to justify the discrimination against women in the church today. Knowing that Paul dedicated his post-Christ experience life to building up and edifying the church, I think that he must be cringing in heaven at the misuse of this one particular passage of scripture, which still divides the church on this very issue.

1 Timothy 2:8

8 Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. 9 I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness and complete submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was

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the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.

Hundreds of pages and books have been written on this chapter, with almost as many interpretations, proving this to be one of the least understood and most contested passages. Despite the lack of consensus and obvious translation difficulties, many Christians cite portions of 1 Timothy 2 as the foundation for their belief in male-only leadership in the church.

I firmly believe that the scholarship leans overwhelmingly on the side of the egalitarian view (which simply means a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people.)

Yet this old and tired argument stubbornly persists, and the reality is that women need help in responding to it.

Here's what that process looked like for me. I started looking at the fundamental objections and the reasons behind them.

1. Jesus trumps lousy theology.

This has been the primary motivation behind the writing of this book. Interpretation of scripture and translation from the original Greek and Hebrew texts have been messy. The reality is that this message has had to come through human hands and societal contexts and norms (which have changed numerous times since the garden of Eden, God's original design for humankind). At the same time, I believe that God is sovereign that He has and still does today

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use people in all of our humanity to bring about His perfect plans and purpose.

Before I move on, I will reiterate that I believe that scripture is infallible, that it is an absolute truth. It is the plumb line and the foundation of our Christian faith. The word of God is not open for debate or adaptable to suit our various situations or point of view.

Even as I write this, I am overcome by a genuine reverence and fear of the Lord at even speaking about His word, which is to be considered sacred.

There are not many things that I would "bet my life on," but the accuracy and authenticity of the word of God are one of them.

It is also "living and active" as described in Hebrews and is currently still bringing increased divine revelation of God to this day.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

In His infinite wisdom and mercy, I love how God allowed for the most important book, the gospel of Jesus Christ, to be written and repeated four times by four different sources. I believe that God knew that there would be some varying theological discussions about certain viewpoints, such as in the books written by Paul in times to come.

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However, the story and theology of Jesus Christ, who was and is God, is crystal clear.

This should bring great comfort and peace to us all. Christ is the living carnate word of God who walked on the earth.

For this reason, all scripture (interpretations, translations, etc.) needs to be filtered through the words and works of Jesus Christ.

Never mind what Paul or any other biblical author said, the real fundamental question we should be asking is what did CHRIST say about the matter?

And very importantly, what did He LIVE out when He came to model life on earth?

Although I understand what Paul must have been trying to communicate when He said to the church, "follow me as I follow Christ," in all due respect, I want to challenge the church. As a devout Christian, you ensure that above all else, you are following CHRIST directly and personally above any other man (especially and including Paul!).

My prayer is that by the time you get to this chapter of the book, you will have grasped the revelations behind Jesus' encounters with women throughout His ministry. Once you work through the evidence of Christ's life and journey on earth, how can one not conclude that one of Jesus' main priorities was to liberate womankind and to restore her to her identity as a daughter made in the image of God? Of course, this was done for both genders as

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He restored men to their identity as sons of God as well.

I believe God did this for a reason, to set us up for the work that lies ahead, which is the great commission.

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And indeed, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We need everyone (both male and female), all hands on deck, to do this great work that Jesus instructed us to do!

2. "Authority" is a poor translation of the Greek word Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:12

The word Paul used for "authority" in this passage in greek is "authentain" is so unusual compared to his other references that he could not possibly have been talking about normal church leadership structures. It is sad and disappointing that even though the most recent credible scholarship confirms that in Paul's time, authentain referred to an abuse of authority, some well known complementarian scholars refuse to correct publications that were written before this came to light.

3. Applying 1 Timothy 2:12 literally but not doing the same for the surrounding verses is poor hermeneutics.

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With few exceptions, no one teaches that women should be silent or quiet in church today. What does it say about the integrity of sound biblical interpretation if you single this one verse out and disregard those verses before and after it?

4. Paul's restriction was given in the context of a personal letter to Timothy advising about a specific issue that the church at Ephesus was dealing with.

There is no command from God stated here and no suggestion or assumption that Paul was establishing church policy for all time. There is also no mention of this in the rest of Paul's writings or anywhere else in the Bible, for that matter. It's easy to understand why this suggestion was made by Paul; it's evident in chapter one that he was referring to the of false teaching that this church was dealing with.

5. To use this passage of scripture to form a doctrine to restricting women in leadership requires elevating a select few verses over the rest of Paul's writing, as well as the entire New Testament.

If you sit and read all of Paul's letters including the Book of Acts in one sitting, it is evident that Paul supported the leadership of women. Several churches, including Philippi, Thessalonica, Cenchrae, and Rome, see this. It is baffling that some church leaders and theologians give such weight to this passage when many other passages of scripture support equality.

6. Churches find it impossible to put 1 Timothy 2:12 into practice consistently or logically.

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There is a wide spread irregularities in how 1 Timothy 2 is applied practically. While in some churches, women can do everything but hold the position of the senior pastor or preach at the pulpit. Others women can't even teach a mixed-gender high school Sunday school class in other churches.

After reflecting on these points, here are some helpful replies to such arguments.

"I've studied 1 Timothy 2, and I don't believe it can be used to shut women out of leadership. Here are some of the reasons:

Firstly, I believe that Jesus is perfect theology. If you follow the life of Jesus, including His words and works throughout His ministry, you will find that Jesus went out of His way to bring liberty to women who were severely oppressed during biblical times.

He treated everyone as equals, including women (as well as those of different ethnicity and color). If women were liberated from unfair societal customs and oppression to be free to pursue their relationship and calling in God, it was necessary to Jesus and equally important to me.

My understanding is that "authority" is a poor translation for the Greek word "authentein" Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:12. It referred to the which is the unusual use and abuse of power and would be better translated as the "misuse of authority." This is the only time this word is ever used in the Bible? It must have been a big and unusual problem Timothy was dealing with in this church, most likely related to the false teaching he mentions in chapter one.

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I think it's extremely significant that this is a personal letter written to Timothy and not to the church-at-large. Paul is responding to a specific issue Timothy had written to him about. This restriction is not found in Paul's other letters or anywhere else in the bible for that matter. It doesn't make sense to me to use this scripture to limit half the church from full participation in ministry.

It should also be noted that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 contradicts much of the rest of the bible, including Paul's writings (those on spiritual gifts and the use of prophecy in worship, for example). They also contradict the record of Paul's practice of partnering with women recorded in the Book of Acts and documented in Romans 16.

So based on these factors I don't believe 1 Timothy 2 supports restricting women's roles in the church or leadership."

These are just some responses that you might find helpful if you are questioned on your theological beliefs on this topic.

I believe that its time we stop using this passage of scripture as a weapon to incapacitate half the church.

Women in ministry during Paul's time

Before we leave the subject of women having authority and teaching in the Church, I want to prove to you that Paul's concerns about women were specific to three cities, as I mentioned previously. His restrictions were never meant to be universally applied or unilaterally practiced as congregational rules. That is why he did not repeat his instructions to the other nine locations.

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Neither did he ask for letters to those three places to be copied and passed along to the other churches, as he did with a few of his letters.

One of the other ways we know that most women in the first-century Church were not restricted from having authority or teaching in Paul's day is that the Bible makes several other references to women teaching men and having authority in the Kingdom. Priscilla is one of these gifted women who exhibited significant power in the early Church. She is frequently listed before her husband in the Bible, and she taught Apollos, who was one of the most influential leaders in the Church.

Then there is Junia, whom Paul calls "outstanding among the apostles" (Romans 16:7). Some translations have altered this to make it a man's name, Junias because she is called an apostle, but there is no evidence grammatically or historically for this change. We can only conclude that Junia was indeed an apostle in the Roman church. These must-have ramifications for our study of women in ministerial roles. Phoebe is listed as a "servant" of the church in Cenchrea in Romans 16:1. Interestingly, the word used here to refer to Phoebe, *daikon*, can mean servant, deacon, or minister. In other passages from Paul (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12), the same word is translated as "deacon" when it is referring to a man, yet when referring to a woman, it is translated as "servant."

The scriptural evidence suggests that Phoebe was an official minister in her church. We can also conclude from Romans 16:1-2

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that Phoebe was so trustworthy that she carried the letter of Romans from Paul to the church in Rome and was, therefore, his ambassador.

Reflection

Thinking back, how have the letters of Paul and the famous Timothy 2 passage shaped your thinking and understanding of scripture regarding the role of women in the church?

Has any of the evidence in this chapter caused you to reconsider your initial interpretation of this passage?

Pray into this.

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Personal reflections and notes



14.

The #!.\$"S" WORD...
SUBMISSION

I cannot release this book without addressing the dreaded “s” word of submission. As a leader in the church for over 15 years, I have never seen one little word cause such explosive reactions in some people. It’s a trigger word for women but also for men because of an essential factor which is “abuse.”

Ungodly, “submission” is a smokescreen for abuse.

I have seen how this is a trigger word for women, especially in the church. I have come to understand that many women misinterpret the word submission to mean “rule over” or “subdue” women. This is a trigger word because it takes women back to the “curse,” which we discussed in chapter two. One can understand that our gender as womankind resists this as we have just been liberated by Jesus

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Himself as He broke all effects from the curse when He went to the cross of Calvary. One thing is clear; nobody wants to go back, neither female nor male.

It's vital that we do not confuse spiritual abuse or emotional abuse for submission!

The definition of abuse is to “use” power incorrectly. It's when authority is used to inflict pain or harm upon another person for personal gain.

We see this in sexual abuse when someone uses their “power,” whether this is physical or emotional, to take advantage of someone less powerful.

We see this with emotional abuse as the abuser uses bullying, manipulation, and verbal attacks to subdue another person. Of course, physical abuse is the same but with physical force over the weaker person.

And we see this with spiritual abuse when a leader misuses scripture or their position of influence to control other people's behavior or oppress them.

Let's just keep things simple and call abuse, abuse!

Let's also call it the way God sees it, WRONG!

There is no form of abuse that God condones; it goes against the very nature of who He is. When you think about it, the only person

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who would have the legitimate and absolute power to control people is God, the creator of humankind.

Yet not even He chooses to control us as He instead goes against this principle of control by giving us "free will." The motivation behind this is love. God did not want robots that He could remote control when creating us. He wanted whole, healthy relationships in which we could choose to respond to His love or reject it. This is why salvation is a free choice. This is also why so many people will unfortunately not come to heaven with us. Not because God doesn't love them but the opposite, because He loves them so much that He allows (and entrusts) them to choose for themselves to either accept Christ's free offer of salvation or not.

John 3:16 sums this up.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

It's a sad state of affairs that there are still so many churches today that condone women staying in abusive marriages because of a misunderstanding of scripture.

I often get asked as a pastor if I condone divorce. The answer is a resounding YES in the two specific instances of abuse and unfaithfulness.

There is scriptural backing for this.

Infidelity breaks the marriage covenant. These are the words of Jesus.

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Matthew 19:8

"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

It is accurately assumed that this works both ways, that a wife can divorce her husband due to unfaithfulness.

Abuse and neglect break the marriage covenant.

The Lord described the man's companion as his wife by covenant and warned him not to deal treacherously with her (Malachi 2:14-15). The Hebrew "wordbagad," translated as treacherously, denotes unfaithfulness to the covenant; conversely, when the man is faithful to the covenant, he fulfills his obligations to his wife. The man's obligations include providing for his wife's physical needs, protecting her reputation, and protecting her from abuse. Provision for physical needs includes food, clothing, and conjugal rights (Exodus 21:10).

Scripture condemns abuse and neglect in all of its forms. God abhors and denounces violent behavior, which is evidence of sin that brings God's judgment. Because of violence, God destroyed the earth (Genesis 6:11-13). The Lord's soul hates "the one who loves violence" (Psalm 11:5).

My husband and I have been in a few pastoral situations over the years when we have had to counsel a wife to get a divorce to protect her and her children.

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I remember one particular situation where we were counseling a couple who had a highly dysfunctional past with a record of physical abuse. Their status looked quite promising for some time as the husband received salvation and started attending church. Unfortunately, he did not pursue his healing from childhood trauma and soon started slipping back into negative patterns, including alcoholism and physical abuse of his wife. This one particular afternoon, she came to my house with a blue eye after being beaten up by her husband. After my husband took her to the police station to file another report of domestic abuse against her husband, I stayed back and looked after her teenage daughter. I remember talking and trying to process this situation with this thirteen-year-old in front of me and coming to one dangerous realization that her relationship with Jesus would be determined by how the church responds to this situation.

Later during a meeting with the mother, I said to her that she had tried everything, including marriage counseling (both inside and outside the church). She had also given this marriage opportunity and TIME for change. However, it was now time to consider divorce for her protection and her children's future. She proceeded to break down and admitted that she felt that she would be "letting God down" because the Bible says He hates divorce. Sadly, this is the message that so much of the church has transmitted to women over the years! What is even more concerning to me in this story was this women's viewpoint of the nature of God.

I want to encourage any woman who may be reading this book in a similar situation to "come back to the story of Jesus."

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Forgo any theological debates and sermons that you might have heard that misused scripture and go back to the life that Jesus modeled.

Throughout all four gospels, Jesus loved and respected women. He treated them with great care and great love. He defended and protected them. He also set them free from a religious mindset that caused both spiritual and natural oppression in their lives. This is who your God is!

Godly submission is really about TRUSTING God.

Personally, I don't have a problem with this concept of submission. Although I have never experienced spiritual abuse, I did grow up in a home where I shared emotional abuse and, a few times, physical abuse. But I have put in the work over the years to pursue my emotional healing, and I can happily say that He has brought complete healing and restoration into this area of my life!

I want to say that I believe in submission. It is both biblical and beneficial to building up the body of Christ. Here is why I say this.

Submission brings order, and our God is a God of order.

This is one of the first characteristics we get introduced to about God. Genesis 1 tells us that the earth was formless and dark in the beginning. God came in, saying, "let there be light." He then separated the darkness from light and the waters from land. God is

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coming into a situation where there is chaos and no form, and He creates order, followed by the creation of the universe.

We see this countless times throughout scripture.

Another example in Luke 9:14, just before Jesus was going to perform the miracle of feeding five thousand people, He tells His disciples first to have them sit down into groups of fifty people. The miracle of multiplication is then followed after this.

God further addresses order in families to facilitate healthy relationships. We see this when the scriptures teach that children should obey and honor their parents. The further we explore this concept, we see that order creates unity, which is essential because it's where God can release blessings (Psalm 133).

Today's most powerful and influential teams belong to some military association, either the army or airforce, navy, etc. Have you ever wondered what the ingredient that makes these teams so successful is?

The answer to this is order. These teams have the most organized chain of command in any sphere. Every officer knows their place and position within that unit. The chain of command is also crystal clear as they have different tiers of leadership according to their ranking and authority. When the army goes out to fight a battle, every soldier knows their place. They receive their marching orders from their respective commander or general; what's important is that they go onto the field to execute this without discussion or

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consultation. They have no problem following orders because they understand how the chain of command works. It's what makes the structure of this team so efficient. They simply obey those in authority over them, trusting in the "structure of leadership," which means that those in positions above them have the intel and information to make good decisions.

Can you imagine what an army going into battle would look like without this chain of command? Soldiers would question instructions they received from their generals. There would be debates, power struggles, confusion, and mid-battle; there would undoubtedly be countless deaths and defeat.

Order is important because, as stated earlier, it brings unity and it also brings protection. Not just for the individuals but the whole team.

Getting to the point

This is what Godly submission is. "A form of order" to create healthy relationships, increased unity, and protection from all individuals involved! When we understand it this way, we see that submission is designed to be a blessing, something good to help grow and build.

That being said, God asks us to implement 'excellent and Godly submission in the following ways:

Husband and wife relationships

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Ephesians 5:21-33

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now, as the church submits to Christ, wives should also submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The order of God in marriage is for the husband to be the leader with the wife alongside him co-leading the family. The chain of command is husband, wife, and children. When a Godly husband healthily exercises this role of leadership (which includes loving his wife as Christ loves the church), it is such a wonderful thing that releases blessing, joy, unity, peace, and protection for the entire family.

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The power verse in this scripture is the first line, "submit out of reverence for Christ." I think many wives miss the first part of this scripture that submitting to our husbands is us revering and trusting in the Lord and His ways!

I believe in submitting to my husband because, firstly, this is biblical, and I believe everything the Bible says. I also submit because I genuinely believe that God's ways are better than anything I could come up with and mainly because I believe God's ways have my best interest at heart. I believe God's ways work because I trust God.

You see, when I submit to my husband, I am putting my faith and trust in God.

Fortunately, I have a Godly husband who, 99% of the time, consults and discusses decisions with me to get my input and counsel before making decisions. In major life decisions, we will usually agree to "seek the Lord together" through prayer, fasting, etc., and then come back together to discern the voice of the Lord in what we each received personally.

Most of the time, I am involved in the decision-making; however, there have been times in our marriage where I have disagreed or not felt peaceful about a decision but chose to submit and support his decision anyway. I do so because I understand the importance of being in unity, and I do so because, ultimately, my trust is rooted safely in God.

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Scripture is also clear that wives must submit to their OWN husbands and not to men in general. One of the main reasons I am so active in leading our church is because this is my husband's desire. He wants me leading next to him, acknowledging that he needs me and the gifts God has given me for us to complete this assignment successfully. He empowers me to lead people (both men and women) in the grace of leadership in my life. He also regularly encourages me to exercise my gift of preaching, teaching, and leading various ministries in our church.

I want to clarify that I would not be leading in the church if it were not this way between us.

For this reason, I often counsel women in pre-marriage prep to carefully choose and consider the husband that they will one day marry. It's important to discuss his viewpoints on women's roles in the church and the home, etc., BEFORE getting married. Women need to ensure that they can follow through with what they sign up for.

Submission to leadership in the church

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Although every church structure looks different, the general order of God in the church (in today's culture) typically includes a pastor

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who leads the church alongside elders and deacons. There is also a tier of leadership regarding the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists.

Churches grow and thrive when there is good Godly leadership in place. Unlike some religions like Catholicism, as born-again believers, we do not believe that the pastor or leader is spiritual “more important,” “more favored,” or “closer to God” than a regular church member. We believe that God loves everybody equally and that we all have the same importance to Him as His children. Church submission is simply a matter of “order” that releases unity, blessing, and protection for the church.

While I know that there is so much more that one could go into regarding the concept of submission, I hope that this chapter provides a more straightforward understanding of what God-given submission looks like and what it does not.

I want to end this chapter by saying that I highly recommend pursuing your inner healing journey regarding the submission.

There is no book, sermon, or artificial explanation that can substitute THE healer Himself coming and bringing healing, restoration, and peace into this area of your life.

Womankind, your knight in shining armor, wants to bring increased freedom in your life, allowing you to trust Him fully and trust people again. Pursue your healing journey. Pursue HIM.

Reflections

What emotions and mindsets does the word "submission" bring up for me?

Is anything new to me from this chapter in my understanding of Godly submission in marriage and church?

Do I need to pursue healing and freedom in this area of my life?

What actions steps can I take to implement my healing journey?

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Personal reflections and notes



15.

The best team

We need both to fulfill the assignment!

No gender can create life without the other. This is God's natural design.

Conception requires both Genders!

“To be fruitful and multiply” was one of the first assignments that God gave us.

This action requires two people of equal value to fulfill this task with possibly an even greater emphasis on the women’s part: carrying a child to full term.

What makes us think we can create “life” in church, ministry, and business without women? We need each other to be ONE (in the same way that God is three in one) to procreate and create life.

Together we represent the fullness of God!

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As humankind is incomplete without God because they were designed to be completed by Him, men and women are incomplete without each other. It is common for people to tell a guy that he needs to connect with his feminine side. I want to suggest that when the woman was taken out of the man, the feminine characteristics were removed from his side. The way for a man to get in touch with his feminine side (personally) is to marry. Marriage merges the two so that they reemerge as ONE again. This holy union gives a husband access to his wife's strengths and vice versa. (I do not mean that a single person cannot live in wholeness.) For the unmarried, I believe that there is grace to access everything we need for life from God directly. One can find WHOLENESS in God without getting married. I elaborate more about this in the book 'original design,' whereby the topic of singleness is explored in greater depth.)

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need for a Godly life through our knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness.

The Bible says that He is the husband to the widow, the Father to the orphan.

It says that God is everything we need, our portion through every season in our lives. And in Him, nothing is lacking or missing.

Psalm 142:5

I cried out to You, O Lord; I said, "You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.

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The point here is that there are unique characteristics that God has given to women which are to be accessed by marriage on a personal level.

However, the same concept applies to accessing these qualities on a corporate level for our churches, businesses, communities, and ministries.

We need women "sitting at the board table with us," included in eldership meetings, decision making, and leading alongside men if we have the fullness of God represented in these places.

Unique qualities of the WOMAN

The scriptures reveal so many qualities that are essential characteristics of a woman. While there are more than this, I will name a few in no particular order:

She is a nurturer, comforter, and protector.

She is a natural builder of community and support systems.

She is purpose-driven and goal-orientated.

She is entrepreneurial and a visionary.

She is prophetic, wise, and discerning.

She is strong, courageous, and a problem solver.

She can operate as an evangelist, apostle, teacher, pastor, and prophet according to the spiritual gift God graces her with.

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God has bestowed so many qualities on our gender as women. Still, the most significant of all, in my opinion, which is needed in every sphere of society (home, community, business, and church), is the God-given gift of INFLUENCE.

One of the most potent qualities any leader can have is influence!

Not title, position, or authority but the ability to influence people to think a certain way and act accordingly. Think about the amount of influence Eve had to have to convince Adam out of a first-hand instruction he heard directly from God. THAT person who has so much God-given influence, I want on my team!

Motivating and inspiring others to take action is the distinguishing factor between a leader and a manager. The best leaders can successfully influence up, down, and across the organization, impacting the organization's results by driving behavior.

A side note to mankind: Stop fearing Eve.

I believe that the root cause of why men leave women "out of the loop" is because of Fear. They don't want to repeat the mistake of Adam, "who listened to his wife," resulting in the fall of humankind.

This is understandable; however, I need to come back to the point I made in chapter one. Adam's sin was not that he listened to his wife; his sin was not listening to God! In other instances in scripture, God explicitly tells a man to "listen to his wife."

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Genesis 21:12

God said to Abraham, "Do not let it distress you because of Ishmael and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her and do what she asks, for your descendants will be named through Isaac."

We need to have clarity regarding Eve's motive in the garden of Eden.

The reason she convinced Adam to eat from the apple is because when she ate from the apple, nothing happened. She was genuinely convinced that Adam had misheard/misunderstood the instruction God gave him. She WAS not the deceiver (the Bible says the snake was); instead, she was deceived.

Awaken the warriors

God said in Genesis 1, "I will create enmity between you and the serpent."

Another vital quality women possess powerful intercession. I have often heard the comment that women are the physically weaker sex. This would be a problem if your battle were a physical battle against people, natural elements. However, scripture tells us it's a spiritual battle we are engaged in "for we battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities."

She is a warrior in the spirit. Women in the Bible exemplify the power of prayer. Hannah's prayers produce a warrior for God (1 Samuel 1:9-11); Anna's prayers are rewarded with God's New Kingdom (Luke 2:36-38).

You want these mighty warriors on your team!

God didn't have a problem with using women in ministry throughout scripture.

In Greek, there is no hint that Ephesians 4:11, or any other verse that speaks of spiritual gifts, including leadership and teaching, applies more to men than women. In fact every New Testament verse that speaks of spiritual gifts, manifestations, or ministries is completely free of any gender preference or gender bias in Greek.

The bottom line is that although women and men are DIFFERENT, with different inherent qualities that make them unique, they are EQUAL.

We can agree that certain qualities are more evident in certain genders (for example, the characteristic of being a comforter and nurturer is more apparent in the female gender than in the male). However, it's important to note that this is a generalization, a stereotype, and not the "rule of nature."

God created man and woman in His image and gave them both authority to reign over the earth. God appointed a woman judge named Deborah to rule a country. The Lord commissioned Esther to rule like a queen and positively acknowledged the Queen of Sheba. At least ten women are recognized as prophetesses in the Bible, women such as Anna, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Philip's four daughters. Not to mention that there are several passages in which women teach men the Bible. Apollos, a man who

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was already mighty in the Scriptures, was more accurately taught by Priscilla and her husband, Aquila.

Personally, I don't have a problem with women and men having specific roles to play in society and church. It's a nice theory as it is also more straightforward and easier to "wrap one's head around" and "organize," especially in the church environment.

However, the reality is that on the ground and in practice, it doesn't work.

As a wife married to a strong leader, I am very comfortable standing back and willingly submitting to his leadership. There are times when both my husband and I discern that the Lord's grace upon me to lead a meeting or a ministry in which we will change roles.

While there is a healthy habit of submission in our marriage, we have learned to place a higher value on submitting to the grace of each other's lives rather than a gender-assigned "role." I believe this is the practical application of the scripture.

Ephesians 5:21

"Submit yourselves one to another in fear of God."

It's important to note that we discern this "grace" (which is the empowering presence of the Lord) by the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is no rule for it, and it is something that can change at any given time; we, therefore, have to follow His leading.

I am getting back to the bottom line...having the best team!

At the end of the day, this book was written to remind us that we are in a battle for people's eternal souls. Whether we like it or not, we have been enlisted into this war by birth. It's the most remarkable "sporting event" in history as the kingdom of light wars against the kingdom of darkness.

All of us are in a race against time, with the countdown clock being Judgement day according to the book of revelations when Christ returns.

After the same goal, two teams take as many people with them into eternity!

However, unlike a natural sporting match on earth, there are no spectators in the stands but rather a heavenly host cheering us on from beyond.

Fortunately, we know how this match ends. We know who wins. Spoiler alert, we are on the winning team, led by the victorious king!

However, what is still unknown is the final score.

How many people can we still take with us?

Family, loved ones, colleagues, those we know and love, and those we have yet to meet. The postman that delivers your mail or the shop assistant that you purchase your weekly supplies from will they are coming with us to heaven?

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Do they know about Christ's free gift of salvation?

The jury is still out, and the reality is that we have work to do. And it's a big job!

The scriptures tell us that there is so much work to be done and not enough people.

Matthew 9:37

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."

Once we have the complete revelation and understanding of the significance of what is at stake, people's souls for the whole of eternity, one would think that we fully agree that every player is needed on the team!

We need every player out on the field, but we also need every player in their rightful position according to their skill set for the best interest of the entire team!

Why is it that as humans, we still find ourselves fighting amongst ourselves for position and power, questioning each other's roles based on external physiological factors rather than on God-given abilities and grace that He distributes according to how He sees fit?

Let's imagine another analogy; if I had to ask you, what type of family would you prefer to grow up in if you had the luxury of choice?

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A family unit with a single mother or a family with a single father?

Or a family with both parents present, mother and father?

It's a rhetorical question because 99% of people would choose the two-parent family unit. But take a minute to think about why this would be the overwhelming response?

All your answers will ultimately conclude that it's because it's the best team!

Although most of us can agree that single-parent homes can and do work to raise children, we understand that God gives us grace for every situation. However, we can agree that it would not be God's best for us and certainly wouldn't be the first choice if we had a say in the matter.

All of us have been raised in a family, and irrespective of one's personal experience, we understand that there plays role that a father plays in a family is vital as the leader, protector, and provider. While a mother, on the other hand, plays a crucial role as a primary caretaker, nurturer, and teacher. As times have progressed, we also know that some roles have become interchangeable according to different family needs and situational circumstances. Sometimes it's the woman that is the provider or both parents, etc.

The point is not to get stuck on which parent is performing which role at a given time, but rather the understanding that overall a child will have a better chance of receiving what is needed from

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their parents if both of them were present! Together both mother and father represent the fullness of what is required to parent a child. They are different but of equal value in the family unit.

Let's remember that the family unit was modeled from the image of God as the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in one. All are needed to represent the fullness of God fully.

God Himself said that we are made in His image, both male and female. In this coming together, "new life" is created, and procreation happens.

This is God's blueprint, His original design for humanity in every sphere of life!

All the inequality, sexism, and power struggles came about after the fall of man when sin entered, not before. It was not part of the original relationship between man and woman. In the garden of Eden, there was perfect harmony, perfect balance, and peace between man and woman. An inherent understanding that together, they represented the image of God. Together they were ONE. Together they were strong and the best team!

If you are alone, single, or divorced, remember that God is your portion and will personally fill in any gaps in your life. He is your portion, and I believe that there is extra grace for you to fulfill your God-given calling and purpose as he stands beside you, bringing completeness to your life.

The Greatest Women's Liberator Jesus

Nothing has changed; God's original design for humanity is still the best and will always be, no matter the century.

As this book comes to an end, I want to encourage you to spend time seeking the Lord personally on this subject.

Mankind, fellow brothers in Christ, I want to encourage you to choose your best team (in the workplace, church, ministry) based on merit and that person's God-given ability. Not gender, not a race, or ethnicity.

But, who is the best person, talent-wise, grace-wise, character-wise, to perform the function and release them fully to step into this.

Follow in the footsteps of Jesus and be bold and courageous, empowering women around you to operate in the gift, grace, and anointing God has given them!

Womankind, this book was written because the Lord wants to remind you of who you are in Him!

You are redeemed.

You are forgiven.

You are restored.

You are accepted.

You are recognized.

You are called, chosen.

You belong.

The Greatest Women's Liberator Jesus

Step out from the shadows of doubt and confusion and into truth, purpose, and destiny!

Follow the voice of your king, savior, Messiah, teacher, and the greatest

WOMEN'S LIBERATOR of all time - Jesus!

Reflections

Personal reflections and notes on this chapter.

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Note from the author

I sincerely hope and pray that you have found this book helpful and that you feel liberated and encouraged to step into increased freedom and to pursue your purpose.

If you have any feedback, questions, or comments I would love to hear from you!

Please feel free to contact me at natalia.venter1@gmail.com

If this book has blessed you please can I ask you to leave a review on Amazon. This will help many others to make this decision to work through this devotional and pursue their healing journey with Christ.

Blessings

Natalia Venter

