

# Women in Ministry

## Women in Genesis

- Men & Women are equally in the Image of God with Equal Roles
  - Genesis 1:27-28
    - ♦ "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."
  - They were given the equal task of ruling and subduing
    - ♦ Men and women were created as co-laborers.
- What does "Helper" or "Helpmeet" mean?
  - Genesis 2:18
    - ♦ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner."
  - Helper in Hebrew is "*Ezer*," meaning aid or help
    - ♦ *Stongs H5826, H5828 (Blue Letter bible)*
    - ♦ GOD is Israel's Ezer- **and God is never subordinate**
    - ♦ Deut. 33:26-29: There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, majestic through the skies. 27 He subdues the ancient gods, shatters the forces of old; he drove out the enemy before you and said, "Destroy!" 28 So Israel lives in safety, untroubled is Jacob's abode in a land of grain and wine, where the heavens drop down dew. 29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, **the shield of your help (EZER)**, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread on their backs.
    - ♦ Psalm 121:1-2: I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where will my help (ezer) come? My help (ezer) comes from the Lord...
    - ♦ Psalm 33:20: Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help (ezer) and shield.
    - ♦ If God is an *ezer and* not subordinate, then why should a woman being an *ezer* make her secondary or subordinate? -Without a woman, a man by himself is not good
- Genesis 2:23-24: Equally One
  - "Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of man this one was taken.' 24 Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and

- clings to his wife, and they become one flesh."
  - This is a statement of equality.
  - The woman is not an appendage or accessory- they are equally one.
- Women are cursed with subordination.
  - Genesis 3:16 To the woman, he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain, you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."
  - The Hebrew phrase in question does not include a verb and is literally translated as "toward your husband your desire."
  - Since this judgment is predictive, the future tense verb "will be" is added for clarity: "Your desire will be for your husband."
  - **The most basic and straightforward understanding of this verse is that women and men would now have ongoing conflict.** In contrast to the ideal conditions in the Garden of Eden and the harmony between Adam and Eve, their relationship, from that point on, would include a power struggle.
    - ◆ The NLT translation makes it more evident: "You will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you."
  - God is saying that Eve would desire to rule over her husband, but her husband would instead rule over her. Replacing the mutually interdependent relationship the Lord had created was a desire for one spouse to lead the other.
  - It is important to note that this judgment only states what will take place. God says that man and woman will live in conflict, and their relationship will become problematic. **The statement "he shall rule over you" is not a biblical command for men to dominate women.**
- Christ has Broken the Curse!
  - Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
  - If we live in freedom from the curse, we should live in a mutually submissive- never subordinate- egalitarian relationship.
  - Christian women regularly receive pain-reducing medication during labor, and no one sees a problem with us using human ingenuity to work to overcome the consequences of the fall. **So why would we treat the consequences of disharmony regarding marital relationships differently?**
- Now, Christian marriage should resemble the relationship of the Trinity: mutually submissive to one another's strengths but never subordinate.

## Women of the Bible

- Women served in the Tabernacle in Exodus 38:8
  - He made the basin of bronze with its stand of bronze from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.
- Hagar
  - Hagar is the only person in the Hebrew Bible who gives God a name
  - Genesis 16:13
    - ♦ "Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees;"
- Deborah, in Judges 4
  - She was a prophetess who spoke authoritatively for God, and she was married.
  - Here, we see that even if you were under the headship of a man, you could still have spiritual authority because she is the judge of Israel at this time.
  - To be a judge in Israel was to rule politically and spiritually, as they were not very distinguished.
  - Deborah makes it clear that, while men were normally the spiritual and political leaders in the Old Testament times, there were exceptions. And if God makes exceptions, it changes the conversation.
  - It is worth noting that Deborah led a mixed group before Jesus came and broke the curse. **How much more liberation now that Jesus has come!**
- Huldah in 2 Kings 22
  - They define the book of the law in the temple while King Josiah is raving.
  - While seeking the Lord's guidance, **they do not go to Jeremiah or Zephaniah**, who are both prophesying at the time nor do they go to the high priest.
  - **Instead, they seek out Huldah to interpret the word of the Lord**
- Mary Magdalene John 20:11-18
  - **Mary was a disciple of Jesus**
  - **She is** identified in all four canonical Gospels. In three Gospels, she encounters the risen Christ.
  - She, with Joanna & Susanna, helped fund Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3).
  - In the Gospel of John, she is the first person to testify to the good news that Christ has conquered death.
    - ♦ **The first person Jesus commissions to give the "good news of**

**the resurrection" is a woman, AND SHE IS TO TELL MEN!**

(Jesus says, "Go tell my brothers" v17)

- ◆ The first word of the lips of the Resurrected Christ is "WOMAN" (v14)- this is not a coincidence
- 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul defends his apostleship by "seeing the risen Jesus" and was commissioned by Him
  - ◆ By this definition, Mary Magdalene would be the first apostle
- She and other women were likely at the last supper since it was a seder, a family meal. (Similar to women being present with the men in the upper room).
- Mary the Mother of Jesus
  - It is notable that Jesus chose to come to Earth and abase Himself at birth through a woman.
  - He subjected Himself to a uterus
  - He nursed at His mother's breasts
  - He submitted Himself to be reared, nurtured, disciplined and loved first by a woman.
- Junia in Romans 16
  - She is married
  - "prominent among the apostles" could mean "well known," but the ESV doesn't give you any other option.
  - Early church leaders (Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, Origen) all took this to mean that she was an apostle.
  - This made some copyists uncomfortable, so they changed Junia to a male name, "Junias."
  - "Apostle" is the highest role in the church. If women can be apostles, there is no lesser role in which they cannot serve.
- Priscilla
  - Regarding ministry, Priscilla is always mentioned first, suggesting that she took the lead when it came to ministry.
  - Acts 18:26 mentions her first in the process of discipling Apollos.
    - ◆ Here is a clear instance of a woman teaching, indeed discipling, a man in the New Testament.
- Phoebe
  - She was a deacon of the church of Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
    - ◆ In the New Testament, the terms elder, overseer, and pastor all refer to the same role, namely, a member of a council of elders who were literally older and gave collective leadership to a local church or a collection of churches.
    - ◆ The early church role that most closely resembles what a minister does today turns out to be the role of a deacon.
    - ◆ When the word Deacon is used to refer to Phoebe, it is not a

feminine form. It is a normal word for Deacon.

- ◆ If women could not be deacons or there needed to be a distinguishing between males and females in their roles, they would have made the distinction; however, there is no gender distinction.
- ◆ Here, the ESV translates the word as "servant," so readers won't even know it's possible that she is called a deacon.
- ◆ In *Reading Romans Backwards* by Scot McKnight, he concludes that Phoebe would've been the letter carrier of Romans to Rome.
  - ◇ If he is correct, then God and Paul used Phoebe as the first one to present Romans as scripture to the churches of Rome.
  - ◇ She would have answered their questions about the letter and assumed an apostolic role in the process.
- ◆ Phoebe makes it clear that women could be deacons and that 1 Timothy 3 never prohibits a woman from being an overseer or a deacon.
  - ◇ 1 Timothy 3 addresses only the majority of cases when it talks about deacons being the husbands of one wife.
  - ◇ And where there are exceptions, the question is not, "Can women do this?" The question is, "Has God called this woman to do this," just as we ask, "Has God called this man to do this."
- It is important to note that we never find Paul telling Junia, Priscilla, or Phoebe to make sure they only teach women and children.

### The "Clobber" Verses

- We have to look at all of the books and verses together and not cherry-pick two verses out of context.
- From what we see in the book of Acts and, indeed, in Paul's own letters, Paul was very supportive of the women who "pastored" with him.
- **1 Corinthians 14:34-35**
  - "Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."
  - This verse is about disorder in the church.
  - We must remember that women were praying and prophesying in church, according to 1 Corinthians 11.
  - Women and men were in very close quarters and, in normal society, would be sharply separated.
    - ◆ Hair was very sexual in the Mediterranean world; therefore, Paul

told the women that their hair should be veiled (1 Cor. 11:5).

- Because 1 Corinthians 11 assumes that women will pray and prophesy in worship, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 **cannot be about spiritual speech.**
  - ◆ **These verses must be about disruptive speech, which makes sense in the broader context of the chapter.**
  - ◆ 1 Corinthians 14 presents no argument against the consistent calling that God plays on women throughout the Bible.
- The church of Corinth is a singular church. So why would Paul tell them to be silent in the *church(es)*, plural?
- **1 Timothy 2:9-15**
  - "Also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. 11 Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. 12 I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."
  - Are these verses about the husband-wife relationship? If yes, then these verses concern the household rather than ministry or leadership in general.
    - ◆ Childbearing is not an activity normally performed in a worship service.
    - ◆ This could be an argument that the wife is not to teach her or dominate her husband.
  - This could be interpreted against the backdrop of the **temple of Artemis.**
    - ◆ It could be that these were high-status women who expected to play a religious role in the Christian meetings but had not yet been fully or properly instructed in biblical teaching.
    - ◆ The priestesses of Artemis would braid their hair in a specific hairstyle to be recognized as women who served Artemis.
    - ◆ The priestesses of Artemis wore costly clothing in cultic activities, and we're now told to dress modestly so as not to be identified with Artemis any longer.
    - ◆ They assertively prayed loudly and promoted the Artemis myth. Now, they should be silent as they learn the Christian way.
    - ◆ It was believed that Artemis protected women during childbirth. Now, even though they have left the worship of Artemis, God will

- protect them during childbirth.
- ◆ Women should not remain silent forever, but they should remain silent until they properly learn.
  - ◇ Additionally, Paul's advocacy for women's learning is revolutionary.

## Middle Voice

- **Voluntary Submission**
  - Greek has a grammatical feature called the "middle voice" that English does not have.
  - The middle voice, in this context, implies voluntary submission.
  - The person submitting retains agency and is not being forced to submit. They are choosing to submit.
- **Ephesians 5:22** (Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.)
  - The whole passage emphasizes mutual submission to one another: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (verse 21).
    - ◆ The wife should willingly submit to her husband's authority in the home, in essence, refusing to scratch the curse-fueled itch to seize control (verses 22-24).
    - ◆ Husbands are to love their wives unconditionally and sacrificially, just as Christ loves the Church (verses 25-30).
  - The wife willingly submits but retains agency.
- **1 Peter 2:18**
  - Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct.
  - The wife willingly submits but retains agency.

## The Age of the Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is the great equalizer.
- The Spirit poured out on both males and females.
- The spirit can set us free from this law of sin and death, Romans 8:2.
- The consequence of the day of Pentecost is that your sons and daughters will prophesy (Acts 2:17).
  - Prophecy is higher on the five-fold ministry list than pastor (Eph. 4:11).
  - **1 Cor. 11:5- Women should pray and prophesy in church.**
- Galatians 3:28- "There is not Jew nor Greek. There is not servant nor free. There is not 'male and female'. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - We all have the equal opportunity to be reconciled to God based on

faith

- This verse shows us what acts it looks like when the great equalizing of the Spirit is fully played out.
  - ◆ What it looks like is that sons and daughters lead.
- After Pentecost, the Spirit calls whoever he wants whenever he wants.
- All of God's people are now priests.
  - 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

### **Important Women in Ministry**

- Since the 1970s, Catholics have recognized four female doctors of the church: Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Avila, and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.
- Notable Christian women
  - Amy Carmichael
  - Corrie Ten Boom
  - Fanny Crosby
  - Mother Teresa
  - Catherine Booth
  - Sojourner Truth
  - Harriet Beecher Stowe
  - Harriet Tubman
  - Joan of Arc
  - Susan B. Anthony
  - Rosa Parks
  - Aimee Semple McPherson
  - Perpetua- AD181: one of the first female African martyrs of the early church
  - Lottie Moon
  - Elizabeth Elliot
  - Florence Nightingale